

Dispassionate Thoughts

ON THE SUBJECTS AND MODE OF

BV 811

N87 *Christian Baptism,*

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO THE REV. MR. —

BY JACOB NORTON, 1764-1858

Pastor of the First Christian Society in Weymouth.

Whoso readeth, let him understand.....Bible.

Let this be a firm axiom, that nothing is to be accounted the word and will of God, to which place should be given in the church, but that which is first contained in the law and the prophets; and after, in the apostolic writings.....Calvin.

A moderate man must expect a box on both ears.....Watts.

BOSTON :

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY LINCOLN & EDMANDS, 53 CORNHILL.

1821.

36X 521

To the Inhabitants of the First Christian Society in Weymouth,
The following LETTERS are respectfully
Inscribed,

As a testimony of his gratitude for their past candour and
adherence to him, on the change of his sentiments
in reference to BAPTISM—

As a pledge of his affection and devotedness to them—and
As an expression of his heart's desire and prayer to God,
That they might all know, and love, and practise the truth,
as it is in Jesus ;

And that we might be each other's hope and joy here,
and crown of rejoicing hereafter,

By their obliged and solicitous PASTOR.

Exchange N. Y. Public Library

LETTER I.

Rev. and dear Sir,

THE surprise you express at "the revolution which has taken place in my sentiments with reference to the subjects and mode of christian baptism," although accompanied with some unpleasant remarks, and discourteous insinuations, has excited in me neither feelings of discourtesy nor a disposition, even with civility, to retort. To elude the charge of "instability" is much less my concern, than to discover and vindicate the truth as it is in Jesus. It is my heart's desire and prayer to God that I may never rest, but on the "Rock of Ages," and on the firm foundation of his *revealed will*. Let this be the basis of my faith, my hope and confidence, and I shall little regard "the opinions, and speeches, and counsels of others," concerning me. I however think it but right, in this connexion, to say that had you, Sir, and "others," been acquainted with the state of my mind for many years past, in regard to the subject of baptism, and my gradual, reluctant, and even painful approximations to my present views of that subject, I should, I am persuaded, have escaped the peremptory and precipitate charge of "being given to change." But as I am not solicitous to repel the charge, I shall make no effort for that purpose. Nor shall I trouble you, or others, with the history of my conversion to my present faith. I will only observe, that as its commencement and progress were accompanied with many and painful conflicts and discouragements, so its consummation has brought to my mind that relief from distressing perplexity, and to my heart that peace and consolation, which the world is, I trust, as unable to take away, as to give.

That my sentiments respecting baptism are, generally, correct, I presume not peremptorily to say; nor do I confidently hope that it is in my power to support them with that ability and success, which will persuade you and our brethren, who are in sentiment with you, to embrace them. But while for this purpose I would neither assume the attitude nor wield the weapons of the hardy *champion*, or the zealous and daring *controversialist*, yet I may assume, I trust, and without offence, the unostentatious office of an *apologist* in my own defence.

Permit me, Sir, in *this character*, and with this intent, to enter the list of controversy, and you may be assured that the weapons of my warfare shall not be used offensively, nor occasion you any just ground for complaint. Should they not be "mighty to the pulling down of the strong holds" of others, yet you will allow them to be employed in defence of my own citadel.

In assuming defensive armour, I feel that diffidence in my ability to use it successfully, which forbids me "to boast, as he that putteth it off." But whatever may be the result of my efforts, in defending what I conceive to be the cause of pure and uncorrupted christianity, I "shall be satisfied, from myself," of the purity of my desires, and of the truth and importance of their object.

My sentiments in relation to suitable subjects for *christian baptism*, and to the mode of its administration, with some of the reasons, which satisfy my mind that the sentiments are correct, will be exhibited in the subsequent Letters. The exhibition will be confined to as narrow limits, as the subjects will reasonably admit. I have only to add, in this Letter, that I wish it might be distinctly understood, that *mode* of baptism will be used in the popular sense, and not as implying that christian baptism admits of different modes of administration.

Yours, respectfully.

LETTER II.

Rev. and dear Sir,

AT the close of my introductory Letter, I promised you an exhibition of my sentiments in relation to suitable subjects for christian baptism, and to the mode of its administration, with some of the reasons, which satisfy my mind, that they are correct. I have, therefore, to say generally, in this place, *I believe that such persons only are admissible to the ordinance of baptism, as believe in the Christian scriptures, and in some suitable way express the sincerity of their belief.* As to the correctness of belief, which entitles to baptism, I presume not to dictate. Every administrator of the ordinance must decide for himself. By this, you perceive that my theory makes no provision for infant baptism, or for the baptism of minors, or adults, on account of the faith and piety of their parents, guardians, or masters. It admits none to the baptismal ordinance, but such as make a reasonable and satisfactory declaration of their own faith, accompanied with a correspondent deportment. Persons of this description, only, I regard as having a just and scriptural claim to the ordinance in question.—*The mode of administration consists in the immersion or dipping of the subject completely into water by a person suitably qualified, and accompanied with the baptismal formula, as prescribed by our Saviour, or words of equivalent import.* By this, however, I would not be understood as denying that the baptism of John was christian baptism, however doubtful it may be, whether he used the words, to which I have referred, or any others of like meaning. Nor would I be understood, on the contrary, as contending that the baptism of John is to be considered, in every view, as christian baptism. Much has been said and written on the one side, and on the other, of this unsettled subject, and perhaps, much to little or no valuable purpose. But however this may have been, I shall

decline a discussion of the subject, from a persuasion that any attempt of mine to "put it to rest," would be unavailing. I will only say, in this connexion, that John's baptism was *water baptism*, and that the subjects of it, prior to its administration, were required to exhibit "fruits worthy of repentance," and to "believe on HIM, who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." Christian baptism, as administered by the disciples of our Lord after his ascension into glory, was *water baptism*. Nor does it appear that any persons were admitted to it but those, who exhibited evidence of "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." As John's baptism *in these respects* was the same with the baptism of Christ, may it not reasonably be admitted that they were *in character essentially the same*? For more than this, I am not disposed to contend. The task of "splitting hairs," contending for particular words and phrases, and making distinctions, which little, if at all, affect the subject in question, I leave to those who are ambitious, in this way, to exercise their ingenuity.

In attempting to vindicate my sentiments on baptism, in the following pages, I shall, as far as I may find occasion to use the words or arguments of others, have a scrupulous regard to correctness and impartiality. Nor shall I, with design, use the words or sentiments of any writer, who is not entitled to credence and respect.

In my next, I shall attempt the vindication of my sentiments of baptism in relation to the *subjects*. In the mean time,

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Rev. and dear Sir,

Agreeably to my engagement I shall now attempt to vindicate my sentiments of baptism in respect to the *subjects of it*. Believing, as I do, that no person ought to be admitted to christian baptism, but by virtue of his own faith in our holy religion, and a suitable expression of his faith, I am now to assign some reasons for this my belief.

My first reason is, that the New Testament scriptures, as I understand them, do not require, or even intimate, that any person should be baptized, without the character or qualifications above described. As I may hereafter have occasion particularly to advert to the Old Testament scriptures, I shall at present confine my attention to those of the New Testament. As these are eminently and exclusively the christian scriptures, it is in these we are to look for a rule of faith and practice. Whatever is peculiar to christianity, is contained in these sacred records. And from them *only* can we ascertain what are the special and positive institutes of our holy religion; for what purposes they were instituted by "the Author and Finisher of our faith," and for whose use and benefit they were

designed. No researches into more ancient records, whether sacred or profane, will lead to the discovery of any clear and satisfactory light on these points. Nor will any records, posterior to the promulgation of the gospel, enable us satisfactorily to determine what are the peculiar institutes of our religion, or for what purposes they were originally designed by their great and benevolent Institutor. Useful as these records may be, in a variety of respects, their utility in reference to the points in question, is too dubious for any confident reliance. Should you dissent from this opinion, yet you will readily admit, I presume, that the New Testament scriptures furnish the only adequate and unquestionable means, by which we may settle our faith and regulate our conduct in regard to the peculiar institutes or ordinances of christianity. Now, as baptism is one of these institutes, or ordinances, may we not reasonably presume that our sacred records contain a history of that rite abundantly adequate to satisfy our inquiries about its design, and for whom it was specially and exclusively designed? When the tabernacle, under the Jewish dispensation, was about to be constructed, God gave it in solemn charge to Moses to make it in *all things*, even to its *pins*, according to *the pattern* he had showed to him in the mount. When God entered into covenant with Abraham, in requiring a token of the covenant, which was circumcision, he expressly designated the characters in his family, who should receive the mark. None were to receive it but males, who were eight days old and upward. The law of circumcision was so explicit, as to prevent the possibility of mistake, as to *the proper subjects* of the rite, or as to *the time and manner* of performing it. Every thing, indeed, pertaining to the Jewish service, and the mode of performance, was described, marked, and enjoined with *remarkable precision and particularity*. All this was necessary to God's ancient people, that they might rightly understand and discharge their obligations. But can it reasonably be supposed that nothing of this particularity is to be found in the New Testament records, by which *the extent and limitation* of the baptismal law may be unquestionably ascertained? If this law embraces infants, and adult children, and servants, by virtue of the faith of their parents, guardians and masters, may it not fairly be presumed that we should find, in the instructions of our Saviour, or of his apostles, some *express provision or declaration* that they are thus embraced? But without this, is it not unsafe, is it not unjustifiable to admit the belief that persons of the above descriptions are entitled, by any divine authority, to the baptismal ordinance? As then, we find no command or precept, either of our Saviour, or of any of his apostles, enjoining the baptism of the characters under consideration, must not the supposition, that they are proper subjects for that ordinance, be groundless? That this is indeed the case, I am, to say the least, very apprehensive, especially, as the New Testament scriptures seem to furnish *no intimation* favourable to the baptism, which I oppose. I, however, am not unaware that many learned and excellent men find in these scriptures, as they

believe, not merely intimations in favour of infant baptism, but strong and satisfactory proof of it. But as I design particularly to advert to this subject in a subsequent Letter, I shall decline the consideration of it in this place and connexion. I will only add, at present, that, as no command, or precept, is to be found in the New Testament, enjoining infant baptism, or the baptism of any person, but by virtue of the manifestation of his own faith, I think myself unauthorized to administer the ordinance to any but professed believers.—To others I dare not.

Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

Rev. and dear Sir,

AS we have no precept or command in the New Testament for infant baptism, so *neither have we any example of baptism of that description*. This circumstance strengthens my belief that no persons, but professed believers, ought to be admitted to the ordinance. Had the apostles of our Lord been required, or instructed by him to administer the baptismal ordinance to infants, or to infidels, on account of the faith of others, they, unquestionably, would have done it. And may we not safely presume that we should find particular, and repeated notices of it in their acts and records? This, Sir, is, to my mind, a conclusion so natural and legitimate, that I see not how it can fairly, or even plausibly, be evaded. If infant baptism were practised in the apostolic age, what good reason can you assign that no mention is made, in our divine records, of baptized infants, or of infants brought to the apostles for baptism. On these subjects those records are profoundly silent. Nor do they intimate that any christian parents ever expressed a desire that their children might be baptized, or that they ever made baptism, in reference to children, the subject of their conversation. But can all this be satisfactorily, or even speciously accounted for, but on the supposition that infant baptism was, at the time under review, unknown and unthought of? To me, Sir, the justness of this conclusion appears highly probable, if not absolutely certain.—Will you say that infants and young children were beings too insignificant to be mentioned in the apostolic records? This, I presume, you will not urge, as you must be fully aware that infants and young children are repeatedly made the subject of particular remark in the New Testament, in relation to things and events *less interesting and important* than their supposed baptism. Does not this fact afford presumptive evidence that it would have been distinctly noticed in the records of the apostles, had they baptized the children of the many thousands of believing parents? I must confess, Sir, that had this been the case, I am utterly at a loss to account for it, that no statement, nor even an intimation, should have been made of the important fact. Should it be urged that these children might possibly have been baptized by virtue of their parents'

faith, notwithstanding no record is made of it, I will not peremptorily deny that it might have been so. But when I contemplate the multitude of children that must have been baptized, in the times of the apostles, on the supposition that infant baptism is a divine institute, and yet that no instance of such baptism meets the eye in the sacred records, the evidence to my mind, that the children of believing parents were not baptized, is too forcible to be successfully resisted. With this view of the subject,

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Rev. and dear Sir,

AS our sacred records furnish neither precept nor example for infant baptism, I think it may safely be inferred that infants are not proper subjects of the baptismal rite. Before we admit infant children, or any persons, on the faith of others, to this sacred ordinance, ought we not, without hesitation or embarrassment, to have it in our power to answer the questions—*who hath required this at your hands? What authoritative example can you produce to justify your conduct?* As I can understand these solemn and pertinent demands only in a sense which seems to forbid baptismal water to the subjects in question, I may not presume to baptize them.

But these are not the only considerations, which induce my belief that christian baptism is to be restricted to believing adults. *The baptismal formula, or words, as I understand them, imply this restriction.* Baptizing “in (into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”—baptizing “into Jesus”—“into Christ;” although dissimilar in expression, imply no discrepancy in meaning, but essentially the same thing. This, I presume, you will readily admit. But what, Sir, do these baptismal words express, or imply? Do they not imply, generally, a belief, a *professed* belief in the truth of christianity? or, more particularly, that this religion proceeded or took its rise *from the Father*; was revealed or taught *by the Son*, and was confirmed *by the Holy Spirit, or miraculous gifts and operations?*—In other words, *that Jesus is the Messiah, and that the religion which he taught and inculcated personally, or by his apostles, is from God?* That so much as this, at least, is intended by the form of words used in the administration of the baptismal ordinance, cannot, I should think, be reasonably questioned. But can these words, with any degree of propriety, be solemnly used with application to infant children, or to persons of any description, who are baptized in consideration of the faith of others, and not of their own faith? Are infant children believers in christianity, or that Jesus is the Messiah? Are they capable of believing this? Or even of consenting to receive baptism? Or are children and servants, who are advancing to adult age, and who may be “sons of Belial,” or infidels, to be considered as believers? Why, then, will you bap-

tize them? Will you say, on account of the faith of their parents and masters? But does the faith of parents and masters entitle their children and servants to an ordinance implying *personal faith* in those who are admitted to it? To whom, sir, in baptizing an infant, do you apply the words comprised in the baptismal formula? To the infant itself, or to him or them, who present it for baptism? If to the infant, do you not *pervert the words*, and make them express a meaning, which they neither do, nor can possess? Could you with truth and sincerity say, in baptizing a little unintelligent infant, I baptize *thee* into a belief of christianity? Or as an expression of *thy* belief of the christian religion? Or in consequence of *thy* belief of the christian religion? This, assuredly, you could not do. Nor would you, I presume, on any consideration, baptize such an infant in this manner or form; nor indeed *any person*, in consideration of his parent's or master's faith. But is not the above form of words equivalent to the *scriptural form*? Can the latter form then be used with any more propriety, with application to an infant, than the former? If the use of the form, as above expressed, be inadmissible, the scriptural form must, I conceive, be equally inadmissible. Each form of words involves the meaning of the other. But believing, as I do, that neither of the forms can be used in reference to infants with any degree of propriety, I am constrained to disbelieve and reject the doctrine of infant baptism.

Will you, sir, reject the exposition I have given of the scriptural form of words, used in the administration of baptism, as materially incorrect! Presuming you will not, let me ask, how can you, consistently with this view of subject, administer baptism to any person, whether infant or adult, *on the faith of another*? Will you say that in administering baptism to such a subject, you use the baptismal words, either with application to the person offering, than to the person offered to baptism, and, therefore, that by the use of these words you imply that the *offerer*, and not the *offered*, is a *believer*? If, as some have done, you should have recourse to this expedient to free the subject of infant baptism from embarrassment and inconsistency, a little reflection must, I think, convince you that it will afford no relief. Is it allowable, in using the baptismal words, to transfer them wholly or in part from the subject of baptism to another person, or to other persons? Is this, indeed, *possible*? In my apprehension, it is not. When, in applying water to an infant, or to any person on account of the faith of another, you say, I baptize *thee* in, or into the name of the Father, &c. must not the words be considered as applying exclusively to the subject of baptism? Will you say, that in baptizing a child of believing parents, you understand the baptismal words as importing that the parents are believers, or as expressing their faith, while they have no significancy in relation to the child? This, I should think, you will hardly venture to say. But if the words do not apply to the parents, to express their faith, will you say that they express the faith of the child, or imply that the child is a believer? If not, what *do* they express or

imply? These queries involve difficulties which must be removed before I can be satisfied that infant baptism is a rational or consistent service. Should you say that the baptism of an infant is expressive only of its *dedication* to God, by the parents, and that such dedication is a reasonable and consistent service, permit me to ask, whether the baptismal words will admit a construction *consistent with this sentiment*? That a religious and solemn dedication of their children to God, by believing parents, is a reasonable service, and that such parents are under obligation thus to dedicate their children, is readily admitted. But are they required to do this, by bringing them to the baptismal ordinance, there to have a form of words pronounced over, and applied to them, which imply that *they believe* that Jesus is the Messiah, and that the religion, which he taught and inculcated, is from heaven? Let children be dedicated to God in a *manner suited to their condition*, and all good men will approve the dedication.

Yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

Rev. and dear Sir,

NOT only does the baptismal form of words, as I understand them, furnish a strong, and, as I apprehend, an unanswerable objection to infant baptism, but also *several circumstances inseparably connected with that significant and sacred rite*. It is "the baptism of repentance"—expressive of repentance in those who receive it. Agreeably the Baptist required of those, who came to his baptism, an exhibition of "fruits worthy of repentance," fruits which were indicative of a penitent heart, a newness of life, as a necessary qualification for the ordinance. To persons of this description, "confessing their sins," he administered the ordinance. Nor does it appear, from the history of his ministry, that he baptized persons of any other character. We know, indeed, that he refused to baptize the "Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism," because they did not exhibit "fruits meet for repentance." Nor, as I conceive, have we any reason to believe that he baptized any infants or young children, who were not capable of exhibiting the fruits required. In addition to these fruits, John required of those, whom he baptized, "that they should believe on him, which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." As this belief appears to have been required of *all*, whom he baptized, as a pre-requisite to their baptism; and, as infants and young children could not have exhibited evidence of faith in Christ Jesus, is it not reasonable, if not necessary to infer, that neither infants, nor young children, nor indeed any other persons, except by virtue of their own faith, were admitted to John's baptism? Should you say that John's baptism was not christian baptism, I will no further contest the point, than to insist that his baptism required *the same repentance and the same faith, as the baptism of Christ, and that it was performed in, or with*

the same element. For their identity, further than this, I do not contend. Should you further say, admitting that John baptized none but believers, it is not to be inferred that the baptism of Christ embraced none but such subjects, I will only insist, at present, that the contrary is not to be inferred. Let John's baptism speak for, and if you please, stand by itself, while we make some remarks on the baptism of Christ, which you suppose is, exclusively, christian baptism.

This baptism, like John's, is connected with repentance and faith. "Repent and be baptized," was the direction of Peter to the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost. "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized." And that faith as well as repentance were required of those, who received christian baptism, as preparatory to its administration, you will not, I presume, hesitate to admit, in reference to adult persons. No persons of this description but such as professed faith in Christ, in some form or other, appear to have received the baptismal ordinance. And that christian baptism was *restricted to persons of this description, to the exclusion of all others*, appears to me satisfactorily evident from *the character and significancy of the ordinance*. Does baptism signify obligation to repent and believe? But does this obligation lie on new born infants or children, who know not, in a moral view, the right hand from the left? Does baptism imply a manifestation of repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ? Are any persons, then, the proper subjects of this ordinance, but such as make this manifestation? Does it denote the putting on of Christ? But are infant children capable of doing this, and of giving evidence of it? Is baptism the answer of a good conscience towards God? But do new born babes, or do any persons baptized on the faith of their parents, or masters, act conscientiously in receiving baptism? Or do they realize the approbation of conscience from *what their parents and masters have done for them*? Does not the answer of a good conscience necessarily imply *personal and voluntary agency*? How then can any person be consistently admitted to christian baptism, who is not a voluntary agent in receiving the ordinance? Is baptism expressive of the new birth or a moral change of character? Does it symbolize the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, and a figurative burial and resurrection? Does it imply discipleship to Christ, and an engagement to obey his commands, and to walk in his steps? Will you deny, that *christian baptism is expressive of these things*? But do any of these things agree *with the state or character of infants*? You will not say, I presume, that new born babes exhibit evidence of a moral change of character, or that they are capable of exhibiting such evidence; or evidence of a figurative burial and resurrection; or that they are disciples of Christ; or that they do, or can engage to obey his commands or walk in his steps! Nor will you say that the baptism of any persons who receive the ordinance, not by virtue of their own faith, but on the faith of others, *implies these, or any of these things*. Upon what ground, then,

do you plead for, and administer baptism to such subjects? Will you say that such subjects are not excluded from the baptismal ordinance by any divine prohibition, and, therefore, it may be inferred that they are entitled to baptism? But does this *indirect argument* satisfy your mind? Will it justify your conduct? On the supposition it were an incontrovertible fact that infants were not excluded from baptism by a divine prohibition, I could by no means admit that they are, therefore, to be baptized. But is it a fact that they are *not* excluded from baptism by any divine prohibition? This, Sir, is not admitted. However, I do not contend that any such prohibition, expressed in *positive terms*, is to be found in the New Testament records, yet, I think that such prohibition is *strongly implied* in what has already been advanced in relation to the character and import of baptism. This prohibition is, I conceive, if possible, more clearly implied in the *commission which the apostles received from their risen Lord*. "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, &c. Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you."—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." By this commission, the apostles of our Lord were authorized and required to impart to the heathen who were "perishing for lack of knowledge," the saving truths of christianity, and inculcate its precepts to as wide an extent, as their ability and existing circumstances would admit. And so far as their instructions should prove effectual, in bringing them to the knowledge and belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, they were to administer baptism. All who were *thus instructed*, and *thus believed*, were to be baptized. And that the commission to baptize was *restricted* to characters of this description, or to believers, is, to my mind, too obvious to admit of reasonable controversy. Were the apostles, do you think, to baptize heathen remaining in unbelief and a state of idolatry? This, it is presumed, you do not suppose.

But did all, whom the apostles instructed, embrace the Christian religion? This is not to be admitted. The greater part of them, it is probable, "rejected the counsel of God against themselves," regarding the doctrines of Christ as "foolishness." Only to some, then, to whom Christ crucified was preached, was the baptismal ordinance administered; and *these were believers*. To the rest, the apostles could not have considered themselves authorized to administer the ordinance. But on supposition they were required to baptize *all whom they taught*, yet infants could not have been included in the requirement, as they were neither taught, nor capable of being taught. As the commission, then, regards those only, who were instructed in the christian religion, it makes no provision for the baptism of infants, nor for any others capable of believing, except on the consideration of their own faith. Should you say that the word *teach* in the commission signifies *to disciple*, and therefore, that the commission provides for the baptism of infants, because infants are capable of being *discipled*, I will not object to your construction of the word; but the *consequence* you deduce from it, I can by no means admit. What, Sir,

is a disciple, in the scriptural sense of the word, but a believer, a christian, a scholar, a follower of Christ, or his apostles? Were infant children, then, capable of being made disciples by the preaching of the apostles of our Lord? If not, how could they have been proper subjects for baptism? Should you say that they were made disciples *by baptism*, I must object to this hypothesis, as implying a palpable incongruity, as by admitting it, the commission in question must read thus,—*disciple* all nations, *discipling* them, &c. or *baptize* all nations, *baptizing* them, &c.

Believing, Sir, that if provision is any where made for infant baptism by the wise and benevolent Founder of our religion, it must be found in the commission which he gave to his apostles to baptize; and believing, also, that this commission, instead of containing that provision, expressly, or at least, by strong implication, excludes it, I am constrained to renounce and reject the doctrine of infant baptism, as coming, not from Heaven, but from men.

Yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

Rev. and dear Sir,

IN the preceding Letters I have exhibited the principal considerations which have induced me to believe that infant baptism is not a divine institute, and therefore, that no infants ought to be admitted to the baptismal ordinance. As no command or precept is to be found in the New Testament records enjoining the baptism of infants, or any persons whatever, on account of the faith of others—as the baptismal formula or words used in the administration of baptism, and the tenor of the commission, which our Lord gave his apostles to baptize, restrict the ordinance, as I conceive, to believers, I am constrained to renounce and reject the doctrine of infant baptism.—I will only add, in this connexion, that *the history of baptism in our sacred books, seems clearly to represent the ordinance as implying obligation on the part of those, who received it, or that it was their duty to receive it.* But if we are to consider the ordinance as *thus obligatory*, must it not be exclusively designed for adult and believing subjects? Unbelievers it must be conceded are as unfit for the ordinance, as they are, generally, unwilling to submit to it. And is it not to be conceded also that infants are utterly incapable of discharging any obligation, or performing any duty implied in baptism?—Is their baptism accompanied with the consent of their hearts, with the assent of their minds, or with any knowledge of the nature or design of what is done? This, most surely, will not be pretended. Is it, then, to be admitted that infants are proper subjects for baptism? This concession cannot, I am persuaded, consistently be made, until it shall be shown that baptism does not imply obligation on the part of those, who, on scriptural ground, are admissible to the ordinance, and that, in receiving it, infants do in

fact discharge a moral obligation, or perform a duty enjoined. But as neither of these points admits of proof, or reasonable defence, I cannot admit infant baptism to be of divine origin.

Should you say, that the preceding Letters give but a partial view of the subject in question, and that the arguments in favour of infant baptism ought fairly to be exhibited, as otherwise a correct decision in relation to it, is not to be expected, it will readily be admitted. We shall not, however, agree, I presume, as to the *number and force* of these supposed arguments. As but very few of them, in my estimation, possess any weight, or can be urged with any degree of plausibility, *these only* will claim my attention.

It is urged that *infant baptism may be fairly inferred from the practice of infant circumcision in the ancient Jewish church*. It is indeed not unfrequently affirmed, and with much confidence, that infant baptism, as a substitute for infant circumcision, has the sanction of divine authority. But the inference, to my mind, seems neither fair, nor admissible. I must of course consider the affirmation as gratuitous. Is it necessary, Sir, is it indeed reasonable or safe to infer, that infants, under the present dispensation, are to be baptized, because infants, under the former dispensation, were circumcised? If so, how does it appear? Will you say, from the considerations that the covenant of circumcision, and the ancient Jewish church, are the same with the gospel covenant, and the christian church? But you must be aware, Sir, that this is an assumption, and not proof. Should the identity, however, of the covenants and the churches be admitted, yet I see not that this would afford a satisfactory argument in favour of infant baptism. On supposition that the covenant of circumcision and the Jewish church, are to be identified with the gospel covenant and the christian church, will you infer that substitutes for *all* the Jewish rites and ceremonies are to be introduced into the christian church? It is presumed you will not; why then will you plead for infant baptism, as a *substitute* for infant circumcision, or why will you deny to infants a participation in the Lord's supper, while you plead for their baptism? Have you not as much reason to believe that the Lord's supper is a substitute for the Jewish passover, as that baptism is a substitute for Jewish circumcision? And are not infant children as fit subjects for the former, as the latter ordinance? Consistency, then, must require you to plead as well for *infant communion, as infant baptism*.

But I must be permitted, at least, to question the correctness of your hypothesis respecting *the identity* of the covenants and churches in question. Although I am not disposed to deny that any resemblance between them is to be found, yet I can by no means admit that they are the same. Before I can be satisfied that the covenant of circumcision is the same with the gospel covenant, I must have evidence that "the new covenant," of which "Jesus is the Mediator," which is "a better covenant, and established upon better promises," is the same with the covenant of circumcision, which eighteen centuries past, had "decayed, waxed old, and was ready to vanish away." I must

also have evidence that this new and better covenant is not only no better than the old, but that it involves the promise to every covenanting male believer, that "God will multiply him exceedingly," make him "a father of many nations,"—that "kings shall come out of him," and that "all the land of Canaan will be given unto him and his seed after him, for an everlasting possession."—But can evidence, Sir, be produced to substantiate these things? *Are these incongruities capable of being reconciled?* How then can I believe that infant baptism is a substitute for infant circumcision, while, as I conceive, the covenant of circumcision is so widely different from the new, or gospel covenant? With my present views, I can by no means admit the correctness of your hypothesis respecting these covenants, nor, of course, the inference you deduce from it.

As to your hypothesis respecting the identity of the Jewish and christian churches, I am constrained to say that I regard it as equally unfounded with that, which respects the covenants. Although, as I have before conceded, *a resemblance* between the two churches may be traced, yet such is the difference between them *in form and organization*, that they cannot justly be considered as *the same*. The Jewish church was national; consisting, indiscriminately, of bad and good. The most unequivocal marks of impiety did not so affect the membership of those, who composed it, as to subject them to excision. By the grossest idolatry, and general declension from the right ways of the Lord into the most scandalous vices and abominations, they did not cease to exist as a church, till their iniquities became full, and "the sceptre departed from Judah, and a Lawgiver from between his feet." Nor until Shiloh appeared "to set up a kingdom" which "is not of this world," a kingdom which "shall never be destroyed." As to the *offices* of this church—they were generally *typical and carnal*. The priests, "served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things in offering gifts and sacrifices, which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings and carnal ordinances, imposed upon them until the time of reformation." These were but "weak and beggarly elements"—"a shadow of good things to come," which, the Mediator of the better covenant, "took out of the way, nailing them to his cross."—But are these *the characteristic*s of the christian church, whose materials are, "as lively stones, built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; a chosen generation, a peculiar people, having their conversation honest among the Gentiles?"—Had the christian church been so formed and established, as to be one with the Jewish church, how is it to be accounted for, that the latter, so far from "endeavouring to keep" with the former, "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," "breathed out threatenings, and havock, and slaughter" *against it*? Did not the Jewish church, with malignant hearts and wicked hands, crucify and slay the divinely benevolent Founder of the christian church? And not satisfied with this, did they not virulently persecute, and attempt the

complete extirpation of its members? Is it, then, to be admitted that *these churches were one and indivisible*? Believing, that this is far from having been the fact—believing also that *the old covenant* of circumcision is far from being the same with *the new and better covenant* of which Jesus is the Mediator, I can find no premises which will justify the conclusion that christian baptism is a substitute for, or takes the place of Jewish circumcision.

In this connexion permit me, Sir, to ask—Is it reasonable or safe to infer, that baptism is to be administered to the children of believing parents, *generally*, under the present dispensation, because *a part only* of the children of Jewish parents were circumcised under the former dispensation? Besides, why will you contend that baptism, considered as a substitute for circumcision, is essential to the visible existence of the christian church, when it is a known fact that circumcision was not essential to visible membership in the Jewish church, nor to the visible existence of the church as a body? These things have a strong claim to our serious and unbiassed attention; but can we have bestowed this attention upon them without some conviction, at least, that it is little better than assumption to infer the baptism, either of infants or adults, from circumcision?

I have further to inquire—Had baptism been introduced into the christian church as a substitute for circumcision in the Jewish church, is it not reasonable to suppose that the “many thousands of the Jews who believed” in the apostles’ times, would have known the fact? May I not venture to affirm that they would unquestionably *have known it*? It is not credible, Sir, that the apostles would have baptized, without acquainting them that baptism occupied the same place in the christian, as circumcision had done in the Jewish church, if this really were the case. But with this information, would these Jewish christians *have been tenacious for the continuance of circumcision*? or would they have been highly displeased with the apostle Paul, when they were informed that he “taught, saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children?” Or would these same Jews, or any of them, have earnestly and conscientiously contended for the circumcision of Gentile converts, saying, “that except they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved?” When it is considered that circumcision was a painful rite—a yoke which the Jews could hardly bear, it is not to be supposed that the Jewish Christians would have contended for it with so much zeal, had baptism, by occupying its place, and answering its design, *superseded it*. Nor, had baptism been substituted for circumcision, can any satisfactory reason be assigned, I should think, for *the silence of the apostolic records* in relation to the subject, and especially, as many occurrences took place in the field of the apostles’ labours, which would have naturally led them to advert to it. Why, for instance, did not the apostles and elders assembled at Jerusalem, to take into consideration the unhappy contention, which then existed in the church, about circumcision, decide upon the subject of dispute *at once*, by saying

that *baptism had superseded circumcision*, if this had in fact been the case? Would they not, in all reasonable probability, have *thus* settled the controversy, but for the consideration that it could not thus be settled, because baptism had no reference to circumcision? Persuaded that this must have been the case, and that the argument, from infant circumcision, for infant baptism, is utterly inconclusive, I will close this Letter by only adding the opinion of a distinguished Pedobaptist in relation to this subject. —“If believers are now to baptize their children, it is not because they were once obliged to circumcise them.” But they are “to learn it from the dispensation itself, which enjoins *all the peculiar duties* which belong to it.”

Yours, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Rev. and dear Sir,

HAVING considered the argument for infant baptism, drawn from infant circumcision, and found it, as I conceive, unavailable, I shall now advert to the argument from *household baptisms*. As the history of the Acts of the Apostles furnishes several instances of the baptism of households or families, it is thought by the advocates for infant baptism, that this circumstance affords strong, if not conclusive, evidence in support of baptism of that description. Presuming that infants or young children were to be found in one, at least, of these households, they infer that the supposed infants or young children, were baptized; and, therefore, that infant baptism is a divine institute. Such, in brief, is the argument.

But, satisfactory as it may be to others, it is very far from being satisfactory, *in any degree*, to my mind. And that it should be so to your's, would be not a little surprising to me, were it not that I once viewed the subject as you now appear to view it. If, sir, it were admitted that there were infants or young children in one, and even all the households in question, and if this were really the fact, does it unquestionably follow that they were baptized? That all, in these households, who were proper subjects of baptism, received the ordinance, is, indeed, unquestionable; but that the supposed infants, or young children in the families, were proper subjects for baptism, I can by no means admit.—Will you say, because the households under consideration were baptized, that it is necessary to infer that baptism was administered to *every individual* belonging to them? Must you not, then, to be consistent, admit that *every inhabitant* of Jerusalem, of Judea, and of the region about Jordan, was baptized by John? for the inspired historian expressly asserts, that “Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, went out to John and were baptized of him” in that river. But we know that many adults in those places were not baptized; nor have we any evi-

dence that John baptized any infants or young children, unless it be made to appear that infants and such children went out to the Baptist, *confessing* their sins. The probability, I think, is, that John baptized comparatively but a *small portion* of the inhabitants of the places above mentioned. Nor do you, Sir, I will presume, dissent from this opinion. Why, then, do you insist that all the supposed infants in the households in question, were baptized by the apostles? Is the term *household* more definite in meaning than the term *all* when applied to the inhabitants of any particular region or place? This will hardly be pretended. Must not the baptism of households, then, furnish, at least, but a very feeble argument in support of infant baptism, even upon the supposition that the baptized households included several children?

But is it so readily to be admitted, as you, Sir, and others suppose, that the households in question, or either of them, included infants and young children? So far from it, that the supposition is, in my view, utterly inadmissible. The households are but three. Let us examine them in the order we find them, in the apostolic records. The first is the household of Lydia, who, it appears, was "a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira," and who, after she had "attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, was baptized and her household." The place where the baptismal ordinance was administered, was "Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia." Another circumstance, which it may not be unimportant to mention, is, that Lydia and her household were "by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made," and where they were baptized. This is the history of her's, and the baptism of her household. With respect to which, it is to be observed, that no mention is made, no intimation given of Lydia's having, or ever having had either a husband, or children; that Philippi was situated in Greece, about two hundred miles distant from Thyatira; that, in travelling from the one city or place to the other, Lydia probably crossed a part of the Mediterranean Sea; that the object of her visit at Philippi, probably, was commerce, or to sell her valuable manufactures; that the members of her household were, probably, her servants, who had manufactured her cloths, and were employed in the sale of them. These facts and probable circumstances furnish, if not conclusive, yet very strong, evidence that there were no infants, or young children in Lydia's household. But if it were otherwise, it is not likely that she would have taken them with her to the river side, to expose to interruption the devotional exercises which were there performed. But as she and her household were baptized in that place, it is not to be supposed, in case she had any young children, that they were a part of the baptized household. And that they indeed were not, seems evident from the fact, that after the ordinance of baptism had been administered, Paul, accompanied by Silas, "entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the *brethren*, comforted them." But who were these brethren? Did they not consist, in part, at least, of Lydia's household, who had a little

before been baptized? But you do not suppose, I presume, that infants and young children would have been denominated *brethren*? Must not, then, the baptized household of Lydia have been, exclusively, adult persons? Must they not have been believers? And must they not have been baptized by virtue of *their own faith*? If the members of this household had been heathen at the time of their baptism, they would not, most surely, have been baptized. But being believers, they must, it is presumed, have been baptized on their own, and not on the faith of their mistress. Persuaded, in the view of these things, that infant baptism cannot be inferred from the baptism of Lydia's household, I will now proceed to consider the household of the Jailer.

The concurrence of several extraordinary and alarming events having awakened in this man a serious concern for the salvation of his soul, he, with great solicitude, thus interrogated Paul and Silas, who were then in his custody, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" To which they replied, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house, and he was baptized, he and all his straightway." "And he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." This, in brief, is the history of the baptism of the jailer and his household. But what, sir, do we discover in it favourable to the cause of infant baptism? Were there any infants or young children in this household? This is not said, nor even intimated. On the contrary, the narration strongly implies that the baptized household consisted, exclusively, of adult persons, or believers. The jailer rejoiced and believed "with all his house." But does not this imply that his house rejoiced and believed *with him*? When the neighbours and cousins of Elizabeth "rejoiced with her" on the birth of her son, do you not think that she rejoiced *with them*? The joy was, unquestionably, mutual. Can it, then, reasonably be questioned, that the household of the Jailer as truly believed and rejoiced on the occasion of their baptism as the Jailer himself? I am persuaded it cannot. But as infants are incapable of manifesting faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and religious joy, no such characters, it may be safely presumed, were to be found in the Jailer's household. Should you say that his household might, nevertheless, have been *baptized by virtue of his faith*, permit me to ask, whether they might not as well have been *saved by virtue of his faith*? "Believe," said Paul and Silas to the Jailer, "on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." But will you infer from this, that the faith of the Jailer could secure *the salvation of his family*? How then could his faith have been available to *their baptism*? That this either was, or could have been the case, cannot, I am persuaded, be reasonably urged. I must therefore infer that the baptism of the Jailer's household affords no evidence in support of the doctrine of infant baptism.

The third and last example we have of the baptism of households, is that of the household of Stephanus. The members of this household were baptized by the apostle Paul, of whom he

gives this honourable testimony—"Ye know the house of Stephanus, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." In relation to this household, I observe, that as they were *the first fruits* of Achaia, they must have been *the first converts to christianity*, or *the first believers* in that place, and as they had made it their business, from the time of their conversion, to do service, or afford assistance to such saints, or christians, as stood in need of it, they could not have been in an infant state, or young children. At the time of their conversion they must have been adult persons, and baptized in consideration of *their own faith*, and not on account of the faith of Stephanus, their father. We know not, indeed, that *he* was a believer, as no mention is made of *his* baptism, but of the baptism of *his household* only.

I have now, sir, examined the supposed evidence afforded by household baptisms, in support of the doctrine of infant baptism, but finding the evidence, as I believed, when weighed "in an even balance," *altogether wanting*, I am constrained to reject the doctrine as untenable, and "about to vanish away."

Yours, &c.

LETTER IX.

Rev. and dear Sir,

SEVERAL passages in the New Testament records, supposed to afford strong, if not conclusive evidence in support of infant baptism, I shall now briefly examine.

Because "Jesus said, suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," it is thought by many, that little children and infants are proper subjects for baptism, and ought, therefore, to be baptized. But the conclusion seems to me too unnatural, too unconnected with the premises, to be admitted. Indeed I can discover *no legitimate connexion between them*. For what purpose, Sir, were these children brought to Jesus? According to the statement of Matthew, they were brought to him, "that he should put his hands on them, and pray." Mark and Luke say, "that he should touch them." Jesus accordingly, "took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." But did he *baptize them*? This is not said, nor even intimated. Indeed we know that he did not baptize them, if the testimony of his beloved disciple is to be credited, who expressly says, "Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples." But were the children brought to be baptized *by the disciples of Christ*? For this, we have no evidence. Had infant baptism, or the baptism of young children on account of their parents' faith, been then practised, the disciples, most surely, *must have known it*. But had the children under consideration been brought to be baptized, would the disciples, do you think, have "*rebuked* those that brought them?"

Surely not. We have satisfactory evidence, then, that the children were neither baptized, *nor brought* to be baptized. They were brought to Christ, perhaps, nor is it unlikely, to be cured of diseases, as many adult persons, afflicted with "divers diseases," had, before, been brought to him for that purpose, whom he healed. Should you say that these children belonged to "the kingdom of heaven," and therefore were entitled to baptism; permit me to ask—What do you understand by the kingdom of heaven? You will not say, I presume, the church of Christ, as, according to your theory, the christian church or dispensation had not commenced. But should you say that, by kingdom of heaven, is to be understood the future state and world of glory, must you not, to be consistent, say also, that *all* infants and young children belong to that state and world? And, therefore, are proper subjects for baptism. But whatever may be your hypothesis, or however you may attempt to free it of difficulties, you will permit me to remind you that the inspired historians do not say that the children, who were brought to Jesus, *belonged* to the kingdom of heaven, but "*of such* is the kingdom of heaven." These are the words which Jesus uttered to his disciples and followers; the import of which, as I understand them, is the same as if Jesus had said to his hearers, "*neither you nor any other adult persons can be my disciples, or belong to the kingdom of heaven, but by becoming as it were little children, or like them.*" That this is, indeed, the meaning of the words, cannot, I think, be reasonably questioned, and especially when it is considered, that, in *immediate connexion* with them, our Saviour made the assertion—"verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child," or with a child-like temper, "shall in no wise enter therein." But whatever may be the meaning of the words, I cannot view them as affording a good argument in favour of infant baptism, until I can infer the obligation of christian ministers to *baptize infants and young children* from the consideration that they were brought to Jesus for a far different purpose.

The passage, which I shall next examine, was addressed by Peter to the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Spirit: For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This passage is thought by many to afford a very strong and unanswerable argument in proof of infant baptism. And this, Sir, is, probably, your opinion. But why it should be so, I cannot easily conceive. I am not, unaware, however, that the promise to which Peter refers is supposed to be the *covenant of circumcision*, or the *Abrahamic covenant*,—that in this promise he includes the infant children of believers, and, therefore, that such children are to be baptized, as Jewish children were circumcised. But this view of the subject, is, I apprehend, not a little incorrect. The promise to which the apostle refers, is, I con-

ceive, recorded in the chapter (Acts ii.) which contains the above quotation. The Holy Spirit, with which the apostles were filled on the day of Pentecost, and enabled "to speak with other tongues," was considered by some of the multitude who had come together, as the effect of intoxication by "new wine," with which they said the apostles were filled. This charge Peter zealously refuted; adding, that the extraordinary effusion of the Spirit, which they then witnessed, was "that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." "And it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God) I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, &c." Here we find a *promise* of extraordinary divine effusion to be fulfilled in gospel times, and which began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. When the multitude heard these words, and other parts of Peter's discourse, "they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?" "Then said Peter," as before noticed, "repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, &c. For the *promise* is unto you, and to your children, &c." Is not this, Sir, the promise which God made by the prophet Joel? Did not that promise on the day of Pentecost begin to be fulfilled? And were not its extraordinary effects realized by christians, generally, in the apostolic age, when they received the Holy Spirit? That this is, indeed, the promise, of which the apostle had been speaking, and which included "the remission of sins" upon repentance, cannot, I should think, reasonably be questioned. But if you refer it to the covenant of circumcision, or the promise made to Abraham, (Gen. 17.) how will you reconcile it with *truth*? Did the promise in question imply that Peter's hearers should be "multiplied exceedingly," become "fathers of many nations," or tribes; that "kings shall come out of them," and that they and their seed after them should have all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession?" This, I think, you will not venture to say. But you will please to remember that *all these things* are contained in the covenant of circumcision, or the promise to Abraham. Is it not, then, impossible, to identify *this promise* with *that* of which Peter speaks? As this promise, which has no reference to infants or young children, *as such*, but to the adult posterity of Peter's hearers who should become true penitents; as it extends as well to those afar off, the *heathen*, who should be effectually called, as to the natural descendants of Abraham, it cannot be the promise made to that patriarch, nor have any reference, as I conceive, to infant baptism.

I proceed to the third and last passage, I shall particularly notice in relation to the baptism of infants. "Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." This holiness of children, entitles them, it is supposed by Pedobaptists, to baptism. But that it really does, there is, I am persuaded, *no evidence*. The passage, however, is confessedly, a difficult one to be clearly and fully understood. But whatever may be its just

import, it will not, I think, admit of a construction favourable to the doctrine of infant baptism, as neither infant nor adult baptism is the subject of the chapter (1 Cor. vii.) containing the passage above quoted. Nor does the chapter contain *even a remote allusion to the subject of baptism*. It treats of marriage, its obligatory nature, &c. And from the first verse in the chapter it appears that the christians in Corinth, or some of them, had written to Paul, requesting his advice and decision on several points respecting marriage, expressing particularly a desire to know whether a believer might, and ought to leave, or put away an unbelieving companion or yoke-fellow. To their query on this subject, the apostle observes, "if any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by (to) the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by (to) the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." *Sanctified, unclean, holy*, are not here used, we may safely presume, in a *moral sense*. And that the particle *by*, is of the same import or meaning as *to*, you will readily admit. What, then, are we to understand by the unbelieving party being sanctified to the believer? As "unto the pure all things are pure," so the unbelieving wife was pure or holy to the believing husband, and the unbelieving husband was pure or holy to the believing wife; that is, the believing party might lawfully and without sin, continue in conjugal connexion with the unbeliever. The marriage of the parties having been lawfully solemnized, the union between them was *sacred*—was *holy*, so that the believer was obligated to live with the unbeliever, who might be pleased to continue with the believer. Their cohabitation was *lawful or holy*. Therefore, "their children were holy," *legitimate or lawfully begotten*, "else they had been unclean," *illegitimate or unlawfully begotten*. It is a clear case that the children were "bastards," and not legitimate "sons" and daughters, if their parents had not been lawfully united in wedlock, and could not lawfully continue their connexion.

This construction of the holiness of the children in question, notwithstanding the contempt with which it has been treated, appears to me easy and natural. Nor will it, probably, admit of a construction more reasonable or just. As I am not, however, entirely satisfied with it, I beg leave to suggest, whether *sanctified, unclean, holy*, may not have been used by the Apostle in the *Jewish sense*. In this sense, the Jews, even in their most degenerate state, were a *holy people*, while all others were unclean. Children born of Jewish parents were *holy children*; but children born of heathen parents were *unholy, or unclean children*. This way of speaking, St. Paul might have transferred from the Jewish, into the Christian church, calling all who were born of christian parents, or who descended from a christian parent, *holy*, and all others *unclean*. Admitting this to have been the fact, the meaning of the apostle must be, that either the husband or wife

being a *christian*, was sufficient to make their children to be deemed *christians* or *holy*, or within the pale of christendom. As children, born under the gospel dispensation, are called christians, to distinguish them from the children of Jews, Mahometans and heathens, so the children in question might have been called holy conformably to the sense of the word as used by the Jews. That the holiness of the children mentioned by the apostle is to be understood in one or the other of the senses as given above, cannot, I should think, be reasonably questioned. But neither of these senses of the word seems to afford any solid ground for infant-baptism; nor, in my view, has it any favourable aspect upon, or any relation to the subject. If the children of a believing husband, being *holy*, were to be baptized on account of *his faith*, why should not his unbelieving wife, being *sanctified*, have been baptized also on account of *his faith*? Or, why should not an unbelieving husband, being *sanctified*, have been baptized on account of *the faith of his believing wife*? Will you say that *unbelief* excluded them from baptism? But if unbelief excluded *adult persons* from baptism, must not unbelief have excluded *infants and young children* from that ordinance? If the faith of a believing parent is not available to the baptism of his unbelieving wife, I see not how it can be available to the baptism of his unbelieving children. The adult unbeliever, in the case under consideration, is as truly sanctified or holy as the unbelieving children. If then the adult unbeliever is not admissible to baptism by virtue of the faith of the believing party, so neither, as I conceive, are the unbelieving children. That this is a just and necessary conclusion, I must believe, until I shall see, at least, some plausible argument or reason urged against it.

I have now, Sir, examined the passages which have with the highest confidence, been urged in support of infant baptism, and on which the greatest reliance seems to be placed. Several other passages, I am aware, have been employed for that purpose. But as I regard them generally as too obviously irrelevant to the subject to require serious notice, I shall pass them unnoticed. In doing this, I wish you to believe, that I am influenced by no apprehension that these neglected passages are friendly to the cause of infant baptism. I decline the examination of them to avoid a tiresome and needless protraction, a thread-bare subject. If the "three fold cord" is so quickly broken, no scriptural cord can, I am persuaded, be so twisted and strengthened, as effectually to bind and unite *truth* with *infant baptism*. With this view of the subject,

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

Rev. and dear Sir,

HAVING endeavoured to ascertain, in the light of Scripture, what is truth in relation to the subject of baptism, and having found the ordinance, as I believe, restricted to adult believers, I should here terminate my inquiries, but for the consideration that

many advocates for infant baptism, not satisfied with the New-Testament records as a sufficient and the only *unpire*, have recourse to *human records*. Ecclesiastical history, as they suppose, furnishes much and strong evidence in support of their hypothesis. They have, accordingly, made the writings of the ancient fathers and historians of the church, as well as those of more modern date, the subject of critical and laborious research. Nor have they failed, perhaps, to make use of every scrap contained in those writings, which they have deemed either directly or remotely favourable to their cause. The result of their researches is a compilation of a considerable mass of documents of various description and authority. Upon this much dependance is placed, as affording evidence that infants and young children were baptized in the early times of the church, posterior to the apostolic age, whence they infer that infant baptism must have been of divine origin. But however satisfactory to themselves and others this conclusion may be, it is very far from being so to me. Although I make no pretension to a thorough and critical acquaintance with the writings of the christian fathers, yet I have been so far conversant with them, as to satisfy my own mind that they afford little or no evidence of the existence of infant baptism in the church, till a considerable time after the close of the second century. By some writers it is earnestly contended that no satisfactory evidence is to be found for the baptism of infants till about the beginning of the fourth century. I think, however, that it may be traced to somewhat an earlier date. But to enter far into this extensive field, or rather entangled forest of controversy, is not compatible with the limits I have prescribed for my pen. As to the writings of the apostolic fathers which have come down to our times, and translated by Archbishop Wake, they contain nothing, I am well satisfied, in any degree favourable to the cause of infant baptism. These writings, "with the holy scriptures of the New Testament, make a complete collection of the most primitive antiquity, for about *one hundred and fifty years after Christ.*" For the truth of this we have the testimony of the Archbishop. Had infant baptism been practised during this period, is it not in the highest degree reasonable to believe, that we should have some notice or intimation of it in these records of the apostolic fathers? This, I think, must be admitted by every unprejudiced and candid mind. But persuaded as I am, that as we have found no such notice in the *apostolic records*, so we shall find none in the records of the *apostolic fathers*, I must conclude that infant baptism is not of divine origin. The reasons for my belief that the writings of the apostles afford no evidence in support of the baptism of infants, I have already given. My reasons for believing that the writings of the apostolic fathers afford no evidence in support of the doctrine, are, briefly these, that they *say nothing in favour of it*, and that *the whole weight of their testimony seems to be against it*. This testimony, however, may not be thought very decisive. It is, to be sure, not very ample; but so far as it goes, it restricts baptism, as I conceive, to adult and be-

believing subjects. The only passages I recollect to have found in their writings, by which an opinion can be formed about the proper subjects and design of baptism, are the following from the epistle of St. Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas.—“Consider how he (Christ) hath joined both the cross and the water together. For this he saith, blessed are they, who, putting their trust in the cross, descend into the water; for they shall have their reward in due time.”—“And there was a river running on the right hand, and beautiful trees grew by it; and he that shall eat of them, shall live forever. The signification of which is this; that we go down into the water full of sins and pollutions; but coming up again, bringing forth fruits, having in our hearts the fear and hope, which is in Jesus, by the Spirit.”—“The stones, which fell by the water, and could not roll into the water, are such as have heard the word, and were willing to be baptized in the name of the Lord; but considering the great holiness which the truth requires, have withdrawn themselves, and walk again after their wicked lusts.” The last quoted passage, from the Shepherd, or visions of St. Hermas, refers to the stones of a “paraboli cal tower,” representing the church. Some of these stones “were cut out, and cast afar off from the tower,” and symbolized “the children of iniquity, who believed only in hypocrisy.” If the passage now under review, has reference to christian baptism, it is very obvious that it refers only to the baptism of adults. Nor can it reasonably be questioned that the other passages have reference to the same subjects. This, Sir, is, I believe, the only light shed on the doctrine of baptism, as to the proper subjects of it by the writings of the apostolic fathers. But in this light, dim as it may appear, we may with distinctness see satisfactory evidence for adult, but none for infant baptism.

Arrived at the middle of the second century, we must be content to grope, for sometime in the dark, with scarcely a ray of light to guide our steps. We must advance to about the commencement of the third century before we shall find any documents entitled to credit in relation to the subject of inquiry. Here we find Tertullian, and Origen, the two brightest testimonies of the then christian church, who both appear to have been advocates for believers’ baptism, to the exclusion of infants, or new born babes, from that ordinance. Tertullian, as I find him quoted from his book concerning baptism, affirms that “adults were the only proper subjects of baptism, because faith, fasting, confession of sins, prayer, profession, renouncing the devil and all his works, is required from the baptized.” In his book of repentance, he says “that we are not baptized, because we should cease from sin, but because we have ceased from sin, and are purified in heart, referring the opposers of christian baptism to the practice of the churches of Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Rome, &c.”—I am not, indeed, unaware that he speaks in favour of the baptism of “little ones.” But who were these same little ones? Let his own words decide.—“It is most expedient to defer baptism, and to regulate the administration of it,

according to the condition, the disposition, and the age of the person to be baptized, and especially in the case of little ones." "Let them come while they are growing up; let them come and learn, and let them be instructed when they come; and when they understand christianity, let them profess themselves christians."—The most, as it appears to me, that can be inferred from the baptism of Tertullian's *little ones*, is, that he did not absolutely oppose the baptism of minors, who "were growing up" to adult age. Nor is so much as this, confidently to be inferred. The truth seems to be, that a proposition had been made, in the time of Tertullian, respecting the baptism of young persons, and that he advised to defer it till they should arrive to a riper, or more adult age.

According to Origen, "such baptism, as was accompanied with the crucifying of the flesh, and rising again to newness of life, was the approved baptism." And Mr. Baxter, in his "Saint's Rest," admits, that "Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian, who lived in the second and third centuries, do all of them affirm, that in the primitive times, none were baptized without an express covenanting, wherein they renounced the world, flesh, and devil, and engaged themselves to Christ, and promised to obey him." Some quotations have been made, I am sensible, from a Latin translation, by Ruffinus, of a part of Origen's works, which apparently favour infant baptism. But the correctness of this translation is entitled to little or no credence, as Ruffinus himself acknowledges that he took the liberty to *add to*, and *alter the original*, at his pleasure; which led Erasmus to say, that "you know not when you read Origen, and when Ruffinus." This unprincipled man flourished at the latter end of the *fourth century*, when infant baptism considerably prevailed in the church, to promote which, he probably so altered the works of Origen as to make them speak in favour of infant baptism, which they did not do in the *Original*. But as the original is lost, it is impossible to determine the extent and importance of the alterations made in it. I shall only insist that we can know nothing of Origen's sentiments of baptism from this spurious translation. As to his genuine Greek works, they contain nothing in favour of infant baptism, but on the contrary, baptism is always spoken of in relation to the adult," if Dr. Gale may be credited. "Even Dr. Wall exposes the partiality of Sir Peter King for quoting a mutilated passage from the genuine works of Origen in favour of the baptism of babes, and proves by quoting the whole passage, that Origen spoke of such babes as the apostle Peter had addressed in his first epistle, *new-born babes, laying aside all evil speakings, and desiring the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.*" And by not distinguishing these from *natural babes* in the writings of the christian fathers, many inattentive readers have, I presume, been led to believe that those fathers advocated the cause of infant baptism, when it was far otherwise.

We have now, sir, advanced somewhat into the third century without finding, as I conceive, any evidence in support of infant

baptism. Nor do I think that any such evidence is to be found in any ecclesiastical documents, till we arrive at about the middle of this century. In this belief,

I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

Rev. and dear Sir,

NOT till we arrive at about the middle of the third century, as I observed at the conclusion of my last Letter, do we find any evidence from ecclesiastical records in support of infant baptism. We find but little indeed, in those records in relation to the subject. But that little, rightly understood, is, I think, exclusively in favour of adult baptism, if minors may be called adults, who were baptized by virtue of their own faith and desire.

At this period infant baptism appears to have *commenced* in the African church, then but partially illuminated by the lamp of the gospel, if we may believe the story of Fidus and the sixty-six bishops, as told by Cyprian, which is, briefly, this—"A country Bishop, named Fidus, in the year two hundred and fifty-seven, wrote to Cyprian of Carthage, to know whether children might be baptized before they were eight days old, for by his bible he could not tell." This letter, it is said, was submitted to a council of sixty-six African bishops, who had assembled to deliberate and decide on other matters. The letter was read; but as it is lost, a judgment of it can be formed only by what Cyprian has said of it. The precise question before the council was, at what age may infants be baptized? The decision of the council was, that they might be baptized from their birth, assigning, as reasons for this decision, "that God denies grace to none, Jesus came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; and we ought to do all we can to save our fellow creatures. Besides, God would be a respecter of persons, if he denied to infants what he grants to adults. Did not the prophet Elisha lay upon a child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands? Now the spiritual sense of this is, that infants are equal to men; but if you refuse to baptize them, you destroy this equality, and are partial."

Such were the reasons, Sir, assigned by a venerable council of bishops. Nor do they appear to have assigned *any better*. In the view of them, you cannot, I should think, form a very favourable opinion of their casuistry, or theological acumen, highly as you may approve of their decision. But whether this history is entitled to so much credit, as you and others may suppose, is, I am apprehensive, somewhat questionable. There is indeed no very inconsiderable reason to believe that "the letter of Fidus is all a *forgery*." The result of the council (if they did result as above stated) is by many considered, "as a direction to be followed only in cases of *necessity*." And it is, I believe, absolutely certain that it had neither authority nor influence *beyond* the limits of the African province, and but little *within* its limits. By a writer of no mean authority, (D'Anvers) it is asserted that "we meet

with no such council," as that in question; "neither can it appear where it was held." But be this as it may, it is at least questionable whether Cyprian were an advocate for infant baptism, or whether the account, ascribed to him, of Fidus and the council of sixty six bishops, is to be received as genuine, or rejected as spurious. I have found evidence, Sir, not rashly to be slighted, that Cyprian was not an advocate for infant baptism, and that the history of the African council was not written by him, but by the pen of some *unprincipled interpolater*. Mr. Baxter, in his "Saint's Rest," as quoted by D' Anvers, says, "that Cyprian affirms, that in the primitive times, none were baptized without an express covenanting, wherein they renounced the world, &c. and engaged themselves to Christ, and promised to obey him." Baronius is also quoted by the same author, as saying that "Cyprian was not for infant baptism." And that some of his works, at least, were interpolated, there is, I am satisfied, much reason to believe. But if it were otherwise, neither his opinions nor his testimony can be entitled to much respect, unless it ought to be admitted "that the church of Rome is the mother church—that there ought to be one high priest over the church—that the principal church is St. Peter's chair, from which the unity of priesthood ariseth—that sins committed after baptism were done away by alms and good works—that as water extinguisheth fire, so do alms extinguish sin—that the person baptizing confers the Holy Spirit, and that the person baptized is inwardly sanctified thereby—that chrysm or anointing the baptized is absolutely necessary—that exorcisms are also necessary to drive away the devil." All this, and much more antichristian leaven, as appears from good authority, is mixed with the mass of his works—enough, I should think, to leaven the whole. Now, if these were not the sentiments of Cyprian, nor written by his pen, is there not some reason at least, to believe that the story of Fidus and the sixty-six bishops is a forgery? But if they were really his sentiments, and written by his pen, I can hold neither the man, nor his testimony, in high respect. How far the history of this doubtful affair has a just claim to our belief, I pretend not peremptorily to say. But should we give it full credit, nothing more, as I conceive, can be fairly inferred from it than that the practice of baptizing infants commenced in Africa, the middle of the third century. But as the story of Fidus is of posterior date, so I am willing to allow, (admitting the truth of the story) that infant baptism might have commenced at a period somewhat anterior, at a point somewhere between the commencement, and middle of the century. But beyond this point, I cannot admit that infant baptism is to be traced. Nor do I find any satisfactory evidence that baptism of this description found its way either into Europe or Asia, till about a hundred years from the time it is supposed to have made its appearance in Africa.

The most distinguished christian writers of the fourth century, Athanasius, Kiliary, Basil, Jerome, Ambrose, Epiphanius, &c. give their testimony in favour of believers' baptism, and in such a manner, I conceive, as to exclude the baptism of infants. The

following extracts are but a sample of their testimony. "Our Saviour did not slightly command us to baptize; for first of all he said, *teach*, and then baptize; that true faith may come by teaching, and baptism perfected by faith."—"All the eastern churches only baptize the adult."—"Faith must needs precede and go before" baptism. "None were to be baptized but the catechumens, and those that were duly instructed in the faith." "The baptized used, in the first place, to confess their sin, and to renounce the devil and all his works before many witnesses." "The baptized did not only make confession of their faith, but were to desire the same." "It cannot be that the body should receive the sacrament of baptism, till the soul have before received the true faith."—"They are to be admitted to baptism, to whom it doth properly belong, viz. those only, who have been instructed in the faith." "None ought to be baptized, without some good assurance for the same, and a confession of faith."—Testimonies of like import might be multiplied; but regarding these sufficient for my purpose, they will not be produced.—Now, if these distinguished witnesses for believers' baptism, to the exclusion of infants from the ordinance, may be credited, the conclusion to me seems unavoidable, that baptism was seldom, if ever, administered to infants in any part of christendom, excepting Africa, during the greater portion of the fourth century. That it indeed was not, appears highly probable, not only from the above testimonies, but from the fact that no inconsiderable number of religious teachers in the christian church, whose ancestors were christians, are known to have been baptized at adult age, some of whom were the sons of bishops; for example, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Ambrose, Chrysostom, &c. As we have unquestionable evidence that they were not baptized till they had arrived at adult age, and by virtue of their own faith; and as we have no satisfactory evidence that any infants, either in Europe or Asia, were baptized till a late period in the fourth century, I am constrained to believe that infant baptism was not practised, except in Africa, till this period. Possibly a few examples of baptized infants might have occurred at an earlier date. But whatever might have been the fact, it is readily conceded that infant baptism at or before the close of this century had made considerable progress both in the western and eastern churches, and that thence forward its progress was considerably rapid, till it became pretty general. But that it ever became universal, is by no means to be admitted.

Augustine, who flourished in the fifth century, is quoted I am aware, as saying that infant baptism had been a universal custom in the church; that it was an apostolical tradition, &c. But when it is considered that his testimony is opposed by preponderating evidence, I must regard it as entitled to little or no credit. Much better authorities than Augustine or Austin decide on this subject, unequivocally, against his pretensions. Besides, had "infant baptism ever been in use, and practised by the whole church, how did it happen that Austin himself was not baptized till he

was about thirty years old?" Or is it possible, pretending as he did, that he had been a Manichean, he was ignorant, that the Manicheans did not practise infant baptism? This, he must unquestionably have known. Nor, had he believed that infant baptism had always, and universally been practised in the church, would he have charged the Pelagians and others, with denying and opposing the baptism of infants. In the view of these things I am constrained to hold the testimony of Austin, in favour of infant baptism, in a very low estimation.

Notwithstanding the advocates for infant baptism thus grew and multiplied, yet no inconsiderable number retained, what I regard, as the true faith, and plead the cause of believers' baptism. And they continued to exist under different appellations during the long and dreary night of gross ignorance, superstition and idolatry, which enveloped the church, to the period of the reformation; from which time to the present, they have increased in number, respectability and influence. Although "the sect has every where been spoken against," and most cruelly persecuted; although an almost incredible multitude of its members have, at different periods, been most barbarously massacred for their opinions, yet they have never ceased, with unshaken fortitude, to bear honourable witness to the truth. They are indeed acknowledged by many distinguished writers to have been, in the dark ages of the church, almost or quite the only witnesses for the true religion. This might be fully substantiated by references. But I shall, in this connection, refer to but one witness, president Edwards. According to the testimony of this eminently great and good man, the sect of which I have been speaking, or *baptists* as they are now called, existed "in every age of this dark time, who bore a testimony against the corruptions and tyranny of the church of Rome. There is no one age of antichrist, even in the darkest time of all, but ecclesiastical historians mention a great many by name, who manifested an abhorrence of the pope and his idolatrous worship, and plead for the ancient purity of doctrine and worship. God was pleased to maintain an uninterrupted succession of witnesses, through the whole time, in Germany, France, Britain and other countries, as historians demonstrate and mention by name, and give an account of the testimony which they held. Many of them were private persons, and many of them ministers, and some magistrates, and persons of great distinction. And there are numbers in every age, who were persecuted and put to death for this testimony.

Besides these particular persons, dispersed here and there, there was a certain people (of the same general character) called the Waldenses, who lived separate from all the rest of the world, who kept themselves pure, and constantly bore testimony against the church of Rome through all this dark time. The place where they dwelt was the Vaudois, or the five vallies of Piedmont, a very mountainous country, between Italy and France." "There this people lived for many ages, as it were alone, where, in a state of separation from all the world, having very little to

do with any other people, they served God in the ancient purity of his worship, and never submitted to the church of Rome. This place, in this desert, mountainous country, probably was the place especially meant, Rev. xii. 6. as the place prepared of God for the woman, that they should feed her there during the reign of Antichrist."

"It is supposed, that this people first betook themselves to this desert, secret place among the mountains, to hide themselves from the severity of the heathen persecutions, which were before Constantine the great; and thus the woman fled into the wilderness, from the face of the serpent. Rev. xii. 6, 14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the people being settled there, their posterity continued there from age to age afterwards, and being as it were by natural walls, as well as by God's grace, separated from the rest of the world, never partook of the overflowing corruption."

This people, however denominated in different periods, were, as I have before observed, *baptists*. By this, however, I would not be understood to affirm, that they all, without exception, denied the doctrine of infant baptism, or that they were generally baptists in the *precise* acceptation of the word, as it is now used. I am disposed to contend only, that they were, generally, advocates for believers' baptism to the exclusion of infants from the baptismal ordinance; and that their existence is to be traced *through every period of the christian era.*

I am, &c.

LETTER XII.

Rev. and dear Sir,

THAT the doctrine and practice of infant baptism in the primitive times of christianity, did not generally prevail, till about the *fifth century*, I have already endeavoured to prove from the testimonies of primitive writers. With this, I should have been satisfied, but for the consideration that it is thought, by many, that *writers in modern times have shown that the testimonies of the fathers against infant baptism are not conclusive, and that they have deduced sufficient evidence from their writings to support the baptism of infants.* This has indeed been attempted, but with what success, I must judge for myself. Persuaded that these modern advocates for infant baptism depend, in a great measure, at least, on *forgeries*, and *evidence of a traditionary character*, in support of their cause, I cannot attach much importance to their arguments. They refer us to several passages in the primitive fathers, which say that *an unwritten tradition was conveyed to them from the apostles in favour of the baptism of infants*; and this same tradition has descended from century to century, in the church, to our times. In the

church of Rome it has been made, by the decrees of popes and councils, equal in authority to any scriptural records. Nor has its authority been inconsiderable in protestant churches. It has, indeed, no small influence even in *our times*. But is it safe, to infer infant baptism from evidence so extremely doubtful? Were we to admit that the passages in question were not forgeries, or interpolations, it would be far from safe to rest upon them a belief that infants are proper subjects for baptism. But as the passages have, in my view, been detected as *gross forgeries*, I must regard them as possessing no authority. In this light were they viewed by Luther, Calvin, &c. who say, "there ought no other doctrine to be delivered, or heard in the church, beside the pure word of God, that is, the holy scriptures."—"Let this be a firm axiom, that nothing is to be accounted the word and will of God, to which place should be given in the church, but that which is first contained in the law and the prophets, and after in the apostolic writings." And yet these same great Reformers admit, notwithstanding they baptized infants, that "it is no where expressly mentioned by the evangelists, that any one child was baptized by the apostles' hands"—"that young children hear not, nor understand the word of God, out of which faith cometh, and, therefore, if the commandment be followed, children ought not to be baptized." Luther says, also, "in times past it was thus—the sacrament of baptism was administered to none, except it were to those that acknowledged and confessed their faith, and knew how to receive the same."

Zuinglius observes, that "in old time the children were openly instructed; who, when they came to understanding, were called catechumens, that is, such as were instructed in the word of salvation; and when they had imprinted the faith in their hearts, and made a confession thereof with their mouths, they were admitted to baptism, and this custom of teaching," he adds, "I wish were in use in our time."—Bullinger acknowledges that "teaching should go before baptism; for the Lord commanded the apostles, both to preach and to administer the sacraments." Melancton says, "in times past, those in the church who had repented them, were baptized; wherefore repentance must be separate from baptism, for baptism is a sacramental sign of repentance."

Beza affirms, "that to permit all children to be baptized, was unheard of in the primitive church; whereas every one ought to be instructed in faith before he were admitted to baptism."

Bucer acknowledges, "that in the congregation of God, confession of sins is always first, the which in times past, went before baptism; for commonly children were baptized when they came to their understanding; and that in the beginning of the church, no man was baptized, and received into the congregation, but those that, through hearing the word, wholly gave over and submitted themselves to Christ."

In view of the above extracts from the writings of the Reformers, it appears that they placed no dependance on the primitive fathers, as furnishing evidence for infant baptism. The cata-

logue might be swelled by a great cloud of witnesses of equal authority. But I shall add but two or three more. Let Dr. Prideaux be the first.—“Infant baptism rests upon no other divine right than episcopacy, in use in these nations.” Dr. Barlow, highly distinguished for his learning, ingenuously confesses, “I do believe and know, that there is neither precept nor example in scripture for Pedobaptism; nor any just evidence for it for above 200 years after Christ—that Tertullian condemns it as an unwarrantable custom, and Nazianzen, a good while after him, dislikes it too. Sure I am, that in the primitive times they were catechumeni (catechumens,) then baptizati (baptized;) and that, not only pagans, and children of pagans converted, but children of christian parents. The truth is, I do believe Pedobaptism, in the third and fourth century, began to be practised, though not generally, and defended as lawful from the text grossly misunderstood, John iii. 5. Upon the like gross mistake of John vi. 53, they did for many centuries, both in the Greek and Latin church communicate infants, and give them the Lord’s supper. And I do confess that they might do both as well as either. But although they baptized some infants, and thought it lawful so to do, yet Austin was the first that ever said it was necessary. I have read (he adds) what my learned and worthy friends, Dr. Hammond, Mr. Baxter, and others, have written in defence of it, and I confess I wonder not a little, that men of such great parts should say so much to so little purpose; for I have not as yet seen any thing like an argument for it.”

Constrained, my dear sir, to believe that there is not much heresy in these sentiments,

I am, &c.

LETTER XIII.

Rev. and dear Sir,

MY principal object, in the preceding Letters, has been to show, that neither the baptism of babes, nor of minors on account of the faith of their parents, guardians or masters, is a divine institute, and, therefore, that such persons are not admissible to the baptismal ordinance. In attempting this, I have endeavoured to make it appear, that the scriptures of the New Testament do not enjoin baptism of this description, nor even intimate that it was ever practised—that they furnish no example of infant baptism—that the baptismal formula, or words, imply a restriction of the ordinance to adult believers—that the import of baptism and the qualifications required of candidates for the ordinance, are incompatible with the baptism of infants—that the tenor of the commission, which our Lord gave to his disciples, excludes infants from the ordinance, and that the history of baptism in our sacred records, clearly represents the ordinance as implying obligation on the part of those who received it, or that it was their duty to receive it; but as no such obligation or duty can be incumbent on infants, they are not to be baptized.—I have endeavoured also to make it appear that

baptism is not a substitute for circumcision, and, therefore, that infants under the christian dispensation are not to be baptized, because children under the former dispensation were circumcised—that neither household baptisms, nor the bringing of young children to Christ, nor the promise to the children of believers, nor the holiness of children, nor indeed any thing or circumstance in the New Testament scriptures, proves, or even favours the doctrine of infant baptism. I have, in fine, endeavoured to make it appear that the doctrine is not supported as a scriptural doctrine, by any authentic ecclesiastical records.—What has been my success in this attempt, you, Sir, will judge for yourself. I can only say that in the view of it, I am constrained to believe that the doctrine is *utterly untenable*, and that christian baptism is to be administered to none but *adult believers*.

But if infant baptism were unknown in the apostolic times, how, it may be asked, is it to be accounted for that it was *so early practised in the christian church*?—Whether the question will admit of a full and satisfactory solution, I presume not to say. Its origin, however, is to be traced, I apprehend, in part at least, to a belief in the doctrine of original sin, and the efficacy of baptism “in washing it away,” which began to be entertained by christian ministers and their people about, or a little before the commencement of infant baptism. Parents who admitted the truth of these doctrines, and felt a desire to secure the future happiness of their children, needed no other motive to bring them to the baptismal ordinance; nor did the administrators of the ordinance require a greater inducement to baptize them. But should you not regard this, as a cause adequate to the effect, permit me to ask—how can you account for it, that christian parents brought their infant children to the *Lord's supper*, at a period, nearly as early, as to baptism, and christian ministers communicated them? If you say, as I think you must, this was owing to a belief that a participation of the sacramental ordinance was necessary to salvation, why will you not admit that infant baptism is to be traced to the same source? If the practice of infant baptism, at an early period of the church, affords proof of its divine origin, I see not but the divine origin of infant communion is susceptible of the same proof. If, Sir, you contend for infant baptism from the consideration of its having been an *early practice* in the church, you must, to be consistent, contend for infant communion. But as you will not, I presume, contend for *this*, you ought not, I conceive, to plead for *that*. No good reason can be assigned, why infants are not as suitable subjects for one, as for the other ordinance. Let us not, then, make a distinction where there is no difference. If we bring our children to baptism, let us act consistently, and bring them to communion. But if we think it would be *wrong* to bring them to communion, let us not think it *right* to bring them to baptism.

But if we have little or no evidence from the writings of the primitive fathers in support of infant baptism, and if this be a fact acknowledged by the most distinguished Reformers from popery,

and a vast multitude of learned and pious ministers since their times, why, it may be asked, did they admit infants to the baptismal ordinance? Must they not have acted *an inconsistent part*? To answer these questions, Sir, as they ought to be answered, is to me a task too unpleasant, as well as too difficult to be attempted. I will only say that the concessions which these great and good men have made in favour of the cause, in which I am engaged, afford much evidence to my mind that their's cannot be the cause of truth. Indeed, Sir, my principal reliance for the support of believers' baptism, exclusively, excepting that which I place on the divine records, is on the concessions made in its favour, either directly or indirectly, by *distinguished Pedobaptist writers*. They have probably been more instrumental, by what they have written and done, to support the doctrine and cause of infant baptism, of checking its progress, and of giving extension and stability to the theory and practice of the Baptists, than the Baptists themselves. This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes. And may I not be permitted to suggest, that it should be, to our hearts, a subject of gratitude, and devout acknowledgment.

Permit me now, Sir, in my turn, to propound a few questions for *your* consideration. By what authority do you administer baptism to infants? and who gave you the authority? Has it not the appearance of running, before you are commissioned, thus to administer the ordinance, when you have neither scriptural precept nor example for doing so? What is the extent of the doctrine of infant baptism, or the baptism of unbelievers? Does it embrace the children of believing parents from infancy to the age of twenty one in reference to males, and of eighteen in reference to females? Does it embrace the wards, and the servants of believing guardians and masters? If so, why may not such children, wards, and servants, be baptized on account of the faith of their parents, guardians, and masters, as well *after* as *before* the expiration of their minority? But if they are not to be baptized at every stage of their minority, at what age will you deny them baptism on account of the faith of their parents and others? Is infant baptism to be restricted to the children of communicants? If not, how far is it to be extended? But if it is, what reason have you to assign for denying baptism to the children of non communicants, who give satisfactory evidence of evangelical faith or real piety, while you administer the ordinance to the children of communicants, whose faith and piety may at least be questionable? Are the children of church members, members also of the church? If so, are they born members, and therefore to be baptized? or does baptism make them members? If children of believing parents are born in the pale of the church by virtue of their parents' faith, what is the character and situation of such of their children as were born before their parents became believers? Are *these* to be baptized as well as *those*? Is baptism an initiatory ordinance, and a token of church membership? Why then do you deny to baptized children, children's bread? Why

do you not admit them to the Lord's Supper, and to the full enjoyment of all church privileges, by virtue of their membership? But if they are not church members, what is the distinction between them and unbaptized children? Will you say that baptized children are entitled to and actually enjoy peculiar privileges, on account of their baptism? But what and how many are these supposed privileges? Such children do, indeed, enjoy many and great privileges and blessings, as well civil, as religious. But that these are the result of their baptism, is not to be admitted, as unbaptized children enjoy the same. Should you say that baptized children are better instructed, and more religiously educated, than others, this will, in part, be admitted. But this is not owing to their baptism, but to the circumstance that their parents are more generally conscientious, devout, and pious persons. But is it not true, nevertheless, that multitudes of baptized children are the children of Belial, while many unbaptized children are found walking in the ways of truth? Will you say, Sir, as many have said, and apparently with deep concern, that unless children are baptized, they have *no christian names*? That they are *heathen*, and *cannot be saved*? Has baptism the same significancy in relation to infants, as to adults? Has it indeed, *any significancy* in relation to infants? But if baptism may sometimes mean *one thing*, and sometimes *another*, or *nothing at all*, can it be worthy of its great and benevolent Institutor, or entitled to much respect? Will you say that the baptism of infants implies only *dedication*? May it not then be pertinently asked, why should not *bells and churches and military standards*, &c, be now dedicated to God by baptism as they *formerly* were? Why, indeed, should not our houses and lands, sheep and oxen, and all that we have, be thus dedicated? Are not all these things quite as *capable* of baptismal dedication, as infant children? And is not their dedication, in this mode, as *reasonable a service*, as the *dedication of such children*? Do you disapprove and censure the baptismal service of the episcopal church, as a solemn farce, which requires infants to desire baptism, and to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, by the mouth of their sponsors, as an indispensable preliminary to the administration of the ordinance? But why do you disapprove and censure this manner of baptizing infants? Because it implies a palpable incongruity? But does baptism, when connected with an *indirect profession*, on the part of the baptized, imply a greater incongruity, than baptism, when it is accompanied with *no profession at all*, as respects the subject of it?

Will you represent the baptism of infants, as, by some, even in the *present century*, it is represented, "as an ordinance by which infants receive the seal of God's affection, and are blessed with the effusion of his grace?" that baptism "contains in it medicine to heal their sickness?" that "we are to return thanks to the Almighty that it hath pleased him to regenerate infants (by baptism) with his Holy Spirit; to receive them for his own children by adoption, and to incorporate them into his holy church? Will you strongly insinuate, that the blessed God, who is no respecter

of persons, will seldom, if ever, "make little children of his eternal kingdom without their being dedicated in a baptismal way?" that this "is a divinely instituted way, for parents to obtain for their children that blessing of Christ, which will make them of the kingdom of heaven," and therefore, that "the importance of thus presenting them is inexpressible?" Will you say to parents "this you may do for your children, and thus secure their salvation, before they can know any thing about Christ for themselves? When Jesus is nigh, and both able and ready to save such as are brought unto him, how can you neglect to bring your children for that blessing, without which they must be lost forever?"

These queries, Sir, you will not, I hope, deem irrelative or impertinent. As they are made under a serious conviction that they are as pertinent as they are interesting and important, so you will permit me earnestly to recommend them to your candid, and prayerful, and solemn consideration. To this they have a claim too imperative and powerful, easily to be resisted. Let this claim be duly regarded, and it will bring you, I am strongly apprehensive, if not to an immediate abandonment of the doctrine of infant baptism, yet to an anxious and trembling pause upon the subject. But whatever may be the effect of the queries above proposed, on your mind and conduct, I must be permitted to say that they suggest difficulties, and oppose obstacles to infant baptism, which I find myself utterly unable to remove or surmount.

Several other things I had contemplated to bring into view on this subject; but as I have already exceeded my intended limits, I shall omit the consideration of them.

Having thus exhibited my belief, as to *the subjects of christian baptism*, and the principal considerations on which it is founded, the whole is respectfully referred to the serious and candid scrutiny of man, and devoutly commended to the blessing of God.

In my next I shall commence my inquiry in relation to *the mode of baptism*. In the mean time,

I am, yours, &c.

LETTER XIV.

Rev. and dear Sir,

HAVING attempted, in the preceding Letters, to prove that christian baptism is to be restricted to *adult believers*, I shall now endeavour to ascertain *the proper mode* of its administration, or the manner in which it was administered in the times of the apostles. However *mode* of baptism may seem to imply that the ordinance admits of divers manners of administration, it is not so to be understood, as used in this and the following Letters, unless intimation should be given of it, or obvious circumstances should seem to require it. Believing, as I do, that water baptism has a *definite meaning* with respect to its administration, it will be my object to shew that this meaning is restricted to the *immersing*

or dipping of the whole body of the subject baptized in, or into water. I shall not, however, undertake to prove that baptism is never to be understood in a different, and more extensive sense; but that this is its *primary and common meaning*, and that in this sense it is *always* to be understood when used with reference to an intelligent agent or subject. In the strict and literal sense, *baptism is immersion—to baptize is to immerse—baptized is immersed*. That this is really the case, and that no person is to be considered as having been properly baptized, who has not been immersed or dipped in, or into water, I shall now endeavour to illustrate and confirm.

With this view, I shall, in the first place, attempt to ascertain and fix the meaning of the phrase *to baptize*. Let this be satisfactorily done, and there can be no dispute about the meaning of the terms *baptism* and *baptized*.

As the term *baptize* is Greek, the Linguist must determine the meaning of the word by his knowledge of the Greek language, while those who are unacquainted with that language, must depend upon the best evidence they can obtain from others, and upon the circumstances which accompanied the baptism of John's and Jesus' disciples. To the latter, I venture with confidence to observe, that native Greeks always have understood the word *baptize* to signify *immerse*, or *dip*. May I not, also, with safety appeal to their good sense to decide, whether this acknowledged fact, does not prove, or at least, make it in the highest degree probable, that such is, indeed, the meaning of the words? Do not native Greeks better understand their own, their vernacular language, than even the most learned men who but little use the language, either in conversation or writing? Would they be likely, then, to affix a meaning to the word in question, foreign to its true meaning? Were these same Greeks to inquire of us, who speak the English language, the meaning of the term *immerse*, and were to be told by all, the learned as well as unlearned, that it signifies to put any body into water, or other fluids, below the surface, can we reasonably suppose, that they would infer, that the word meant *sprinkling* or *partial wetting*? The supposition, Sir, is inadmissible. But can we with any more propriety infer from the explanation which they give of *baptizō*, that the word means *sprinkling* or *partial wetting*? I presume that we cannot. I admit, indeed, that the word is sometimes used in a figurative and qualified sense, yet I must contend that its primary and proper meaning is not ambiguous, but definite, and that the meaning is *immerse* or *dip*.

Learned philologists tell us that the word *baptizō* signifies something more than merely to immerse or dip. They say that it is a *dyer's* word, and signifies to dip, so as to colour. Admitting the correctness of this criticism, the word conveys "two ideas, the one literal, *dipping*, the other figurative, *colouring*, a figure however expressive of a real fact; meaning that John by immersing persons in the river Jordan, conferred a character, a moral hue, as dyers, by dipping in a dying vat, set a tinct or

colour. John, by baptism, discriminated his disciples from other men, as dyers, by colouring, distinguish stuffs." That this criticism on the word is just, is not improbable. I am not disposed, however, to contend for it, further than to secure the idea of immersion or dipping.

If the meaning of the word *baptizō* is so indefinite and equivocal that we cannot ascertain what it is, is it possible to know whether we have ever been baptized, or when, if ever, the ordinance is rightly administered? If we neither do, nor can know the meaning of the word, it is a clear case that we neither know nor can know, when, or whether the unknown thing or duty, which may be comprised in it, is practically regarded. But can we, Sir, reasonably suppose that the signification of the word is thus indefinite and uncertain? If this were really the case, must it not have arisen either from the fact, that the Greek language does not afford a word or phrase, which clearly expresses a particular mode of wetting with water? or that Christ, who used that language, designedly employed a word of ambiguous signification, when he might have done otherwise? But you will not say, I presume, that the Greek language is so barren, as to afford no words or phrases, which distinctly express the different modes of wetting persons and things. You well know, that this language affords words which *distinctly* express the ideas of *sprinkling and pouring water*, and of *the act of friction or rubbing with water*; and that these words are as *distinct* in their construction, from the word *baptizō*, as these *English words* are *distinct* from the word *immerse*. If, then, the Greek language contains a word, which expresses the act of wetting with water, distinct from that of sprinkling, &c. and if that word were used by our Saviour, is it not obvious that it does not signify sprinkling, &c. But are there any other modes of wetting with water aside from *these*, but *immersion or dipping into water*? As Christ, then, did not use a word, which confessedly signifies sprinkling, nor a word, which confessedly signifies pouring, nor a word, which confessedly signifies wetting, connected with the circumstance of friction or rubbing; but a word, which signifies a *different mode* of wetting, must not this different mode *necessarily* imply *immersion or dipping*? Is not immersion or dipping, then, the *exclusive* meaning of the word *baptizō*, as used by our Saviour, if he used it according to its primary, or first, and common meaning? This inference appears too obvious to admit of doubt. But are we to suppose that our Saviour, in whom there was no guile, and who always spake the words of truth and soberness; who instructed the ignorant, and them that were out of the way, to enlighten and reclaim them; and who accommodated his words to the understandings of babes in knowledge—Are we to suppose, Sir, that our Saviour, "who possessed this character, as a teacher, would have used the word in question, in so indefinite, so doubtful a sense, that his hearers *could not determine its import*? Or are we to suppose that his disciples put such different constructions upon the word, that some, in the discharge of their commission,

baptized by *sprinkling*, some by *pouring*, some by *rubbing* with water, and others by *immersion*, or *dipping*? The supposition that these things were really so, I must regard not merely as gratuitous, but utterly inadmissible.

Suppose, Sir, that our Saviour were now on earth, as a teacher sent from God, and were to deliver his instructions in our native language; suppose he were to select a certain number of his followers to be employed in a foreign mission, and then to give them a commission, expressly requiring them to instruct, or disciple as many as possible, in the missionary field, and then to *immerse*, or *dip them into water* in his name,—would these missionaries, do you think, so construe their commission, as to infer that it required them to administer the baptismal ordinance by *sprinkling*, &c.? Would they be likely to believe, or even suspect, that to immerse or dip into water, meant to sprinkle water upon a person's face, or to pour it upon his head, or to rub his body with water? This, I think, you will hardly say. But you have as good reason for saying so, as to say that *these different modes* of wetting are intended by *baptizō*.

Permit me to state another case. Suppose the words *baptizō*, *baptisma*, &c. had been translated, and we were always to find, in the common version of the Bible, the word *immerse* or *dip*, instead of *baptize*, the word *immersion* instead of *baptism*, and the word *immersed* instead of *baptized*, should we ever have supposed that the idea of sprinkling, or pouring, or rubbing, was conveyed by them? Why then should we suppose that these different modes of wetting are implied in the same words, when we read them in *Greek characters*? Does a change in the form of the letters, which compose the words, change the meaning of the words themselves? If not, let us frankly acknowledge it. Let us do it openly and explicitly for the information of those whom we instruct, and who are unacquainted with the Greek language. Were the words under consideration translated, you would find it very difficult to persuade your hearers to believe, that they convey any other ideas than they obviously express. But if you could not make them believe that immerse means to *sprinkle*, immersion, *sprinkling*, and immersed, *sprinkled*, why will you persuade them to believe that these things are meant by the same words, when they are composed of Greek characters? Should you say that these words are so extensive in their meaning, as to embrace every kind of wetting with water—that *baptizō*, for example, although its primary and common meaning, is to *immerse* or *dip*, signifies also to *sprinkle*, &c. permit me to ask—have you not as good reason to say, that *immerse*, although it signifies, primarily, to *put any body under the surface of the water*, signifies also to *sprinkle*, &c.? But will you venture say this? I presume you will not. You ought not, therefore, I am persuaded, to say it with reference to the word *baptizō*, and for this plain reason, that *baptizō* is synonymous with *immerse*. But suppose, as I am willing to allow, that the word does sometimes, in a figurative, or improper, or secondary sense, imply something different from immersion

or dipping, is it justifiable, habitually, or ordinarily, to depart from its first and common sense, in our practice? Is it right, to sprinkle for baptism, either habitually or in a *single instance*, when the first and common meaning of the word *baptizō*, is to immerse or dip? Believing, as I do, that we are to be guided, not by a figurative, or mystical, or secondary sense of the word, but that we are to explain it according to its primary, and common acceptance, and to regulate our conduct accordingly, I dare not substitute sprinkling for immersion.

Yours, &c.

LETTER XV.

Rev and dear Sir,

THAT the word *baptizō* or *baptize* is definite and unequivocal in its primary and common meaning, and that it expresses the act of *immersing* or *dipping any body below the surface of water*, appears highly probable, if not certain, from the preceding Letter. The fact that native Greeks have always understood the word in this sense, furnishes, it seems to me, an unanswerable argument in proof that this is its real meaning. But should you, to invalidate the force of this argument, say that the Greeks, in general, might not well understand their own language; that but few if any of them ever made a distinguished figure as philologists, and that *learned foreigners* have been much better qualified to ascertain the meaning of the word in question, *let us appeal to their authority*. Should they decide that *baptizō* signifies to *immerse* or *dip*, ought we not to acquiesce in their decision, unless we can appeal to a more competent umpire? But where is such an umpire to be found! We neither of us pretend, I presume, to be better, nor indeed so well acquainted with the Greek language, as professed linguists, who have made deep and critical researches into Grecian literature. We cannot, therefore, with much confidence oppose any criticisms we may make upon the word under consideration, to theirs; nor ought we to put in competition with their's, the criticisms of others, who are comparatively but smatterers in Greek. If, then, the most distinguished linguists have decided that the word in question signifies what I contend for, ought we not to be satisfied with their decision as correct, and especially if we have good evidence that no partial views and feelings, no sinister considerations, influenced their decision? To their authority, notwithstanding they practised sprinkling for baptism, I am willing to appeal, and submit to their decision.

Scapula and Stephens, "two as great masters of the Greek tongue as any we have, tell us in their lexicons, that *baptizō* from *bapto*, signifies *mergo, immergo, submergo, obruo*; also *tingo, quod fit immergendo, inficere, imbuere, viz. to dip, plunge, overwhelm, put under, cover over, to dye in colour, which is done by plunging.*"

Leigh, in his *Critica Sacra*, affirms that its "native and proper signification is to dip into water, or to plunge under water; and that it is taken from a dyer's vat, and imports a dying, or giving a fresh colour, and not a bare washing only." For this, he quotes several highly respected authorities, and then adds that "some would have it signify washing, which sense, Erasmus," he observes, "opposed, affirming that it was not otherwise so, than by consequence; for the proper signification was such a dipping or plunging as dyers use for dying of cloths."

Beza, on Matt. iii. 11, says "the word signifies to dye by dipping."

Luther.—"The term baptism, is a Greek word. It may be rendered immersion, as when we plunge something in water, that it may be entirely covered with water. And though that custom is now abolished among the generality, (for even children are not entirely immersed, but only have a little water poured on them;) nevertheless, they ought to be completely immersed, and immediately drawn out. *For the etymology of the word evidently requires it.*"

Dr. Taylor.—"If you would attend to the proper signification of the word, baptism signifies plunging in water, or dipping with washing."

Dr. Campbell.—"The word, both in sacred authors, and in classical, signifies to dip, to plunge, to immerse; and was rendered by Tertullian, the oldest of the Latin fathers, *tingere*, the term used for dying cloth, which was by immersion. *It was always construed suitably to this meaning.*" "When, therefore, the Greek word *baptizō* is adopted, I may say, rather than translated into modern languages, the mode of construction ought to be preserved, so far as may conduce to suggest its original import. It is to be regretted that we have so much evidence, that even good and learned men allow their judgments to be warped by the sentiments and customs of the sect which they prefer. The true partisan, of whatever denomination, always inclines to correct the diction of the Spirit, by that of the party." The Dr. further observes, that *baptizō*, so far as he knows, never is employed in the sense of *raino*, to sprinkle." He admits, also, that the primitive word *bapto* is synonymous with its derivative *baptizō*.—To this catalogue many more names of equal celebrity, who give the same meaning to the word, might be added. Nor is it unworthy of remark, that lexicographers both of dead and living languages, generally agree that *baptize* signifies to immerse or dip. I know of but one (Cole) who has ventured to define the word, to sprinkle, which is the last of his definitions, as he is, perhaps, the last in authority among the writers of dictionaries.

Now, Sir, what shall we say in view of the above testimonies in favour of immersion? If we may reject them as inconclusive and unsatisfactory, what testimony may we not reject? Or what can we believe? As the writers, whom I have named, were eminently learned, we cannot attribute their definitions of *baptizō* to ignorance or incompetency; as they were Pedobaptists, we

cannot attribute them to any bias or partiality towards Baptists, or their system ; and as we trust, they were eminently good men, we may not attribute their definitions to depravity of heart. We must suppose that, in giving their unequivocal testimony in favour of immersion, or dipping, they acted conscientiously and from a clear and full conviction of their minds. But what, Sir, have you to *counterbalance* this testimony, or to *oppose* to it ? Can you produce any approved and valid authority to counteract it ? Can you quote a single writer of any considerable eminence, who denies the correctness of the above definitions, or who denies that the primary and common signification of *baptizō*, is to *immerse* or *dip* ? You may indeed cite authors who contend that the meaning of the word is not *necessarily* restricted to immersion ; that it may have a more extensive meaning, and that pouring and sprinkling is valid baptism. But in doing this, you would effect little or nothing, I am persuaded, in support of the doctrine of sprinkling, as christian baptism, unless you can produce *one instance*, at least, in which the word *baptizō*, literally applied, signifies to *sprinkle*, and not to *immerse*, or to *wash* by immersion. But this, I believe, you will find not merely difficult, but *impracticable*. You may, indeed, make it appear that “the word, in figurative applications, like the English words *dip* and *immerse*, and like *all other words*, is probably used with some freedom. Milton thus uses the word *dip*, “a cold shuddering dew *dips* me all o’er.” But who can suppose that the word is here used in its primary and literal sense ? There is scarcely an important word in our language but is used with the same latitude. But when thus used, the attentive reader will seldom, if ever, fail to discover it. Nor is it difficult, generally, to ascertain when *baptizō* is used in a figurative, or improper sense. I only contend that its direct and proper meaning is to *immerse*, or *dip* into water. If this were not the case, but if this, and other words, when used in their literal and proper sense, might be understood to import various, and even opposite things, *should we not be entirely destitute of a correct and safe rule of interpretation* ? Might we not be forever learning without coming to the knowledge of the truth, with respect to the true meaning of words ? What precept or law, either human or divine, can be *obligatory*, if words are so indefinite in their signification ? But if *baptizō* has a definite meaning, and if the meaning be either to *immerse* or *sprinkle*, the word is intelligible, and the command, to be baptized, must be obligatory. If the word signifies to *immerse*, then immersion is baptism ; otherwise it is not so. But if it signifies *sprinkle*, then sprinkling is baptism : otherwise it is not so ; for surely *different and disagreeing things* can never be *one and the same thing*. Without a *form*, we cannot infer a *substance*. Where the form of baptism does not exist, we cannot infer the existence of baptism. As baptism, then, is equivalent to immersion, I must infer that, as sprinkling is not the *form*, it cannot denote the *substance* of baptism.

Yours, &c.

LETTER XVI.

Rev. and dear Sir,

IF, as I have endeavoured to prove in my last letter, *baptizō* is restricted in its meaning to the act of immersing or dipping into water, it may reasonably be inferred that baptism was thus administered by John, the disciples of our Lord, and by the administrators of the ordinance subsequent to the apostolic age. And that this really was the case, I shall now attempt to prove. Although I do not expect to produce demonstrative proof of the fact, like that of which a mathematical proposition is susceptible; yet I shall produce, I hope, such proof, as will be satisfactory to the unbiassed mind.

If the primary and legitimate meaning of *baptizō* is to immerse or dip, as you, Sir, I presume, will admit, is it not reasonable, if not necessary, to conclude that the apostles of our Lord, in administering the ordinance of baptism, regarded the first and obvious acceptance of the word, rather than a supposed, or real indirect and remote meaning? Although this may not be absolutely certain, yet, to me, it appears in the highest degree probable. Would Naaman, do you think, have complied with the direction of the prophet, had he sprinkled his face with the waters of Jordan, instead of baptizing or dipping himself in them? How then can it reasonably be supposed that the disciples of our Lord could have complied with the direction of their Master, had they sprinkled, and not immersed believers? That they really did baptize by immersion, and that John baptized in the same way, is susceptible of as strong proof, as can be derived from the testimony of such men, as are entitled to the highest credence. If every part of this testimony should not have equal claim to belief, yet, when viewed in the aggregate, I cannot but regard it as satisfactory.

We can learn but little, as I have already observed, from the apostolic fathers, during the space of "about one hundred and fifty years after Christ," in relation to this subject. But that little is wholly in favour, as I conceive, of the fact for which I contend. The only passages I find in their writings, on which I think any reliance can be placed in determining the mode of baptism, are the following from the epistle of St. Barnabas and the similitudes of the Shepherd of St. Hermas. "Consider how he (Christ) hath joined both the cross and the water together. For this he saith, blessed are they who putting their trust in the cross, descend into the water; for they shall have their reward in due time."—"We go down into the water full of sins and pollutions; but coming up again bringing forth fruit." In his ninth similitude "the Shepherd" speaks of the subjects of baptism, as "sealed with the seal of the Son of God"—"now that seal is the water of baptism, into which men go down under the obligation unto death, but come up, appointed unto life"—"The apostles and teachers, who preached the name of the Son of God, went down into the

water with them, and again came up, &c.” However these passages do not absolutely prove that baptism was practised by immersion in the apostolic age; yet if they refer to the subject of baptism, you will allow, I presume, that they strongly favour that mode of administration. Tertullian, the first Latin father, in giving his testimony in favour of immersion, observes, “It is all one, whether we are washed in the sea, or in a pond; in a fountain, or in a river; in a standing, or in a running water. Nor is there any difference between those that John baptized in Jordan, and those that Peter baptized in the Tiber.”

Justin Martyr speaks of baptism as “a washing in the name of the Father, &c.”

Basil.—“By three immersions we administer this important ceremony of baptism, that death may be represented in a figure.”

Gregory.—“Baptism, in primitive times, was administered by immersion.”—“Many were so desirous of receiving this initiatory rite in the same place with Christ, that they delayed baptism, till they could travel into Judea. The emperor Constantine was among the number, and earnestly desired to receive the baptismal rite in the waters of Jordan.”

Mr. Chambers.—“In the primitive times this ceremony was performed by immersion, as it is to this day, in the oriental churches, according to the original signification of the word.”

Dr. Wall.—“We should not know by these accounts (John iii. 23. Mark i. 5. Acts viii. 38) whether the whole body of the baptized was put under water, head and all, were it not for two later proofs, which seem to me to put it out of question. One, that St. Paul does twice, in an allusive way of speaking, call baptism a burial, which allusion is not so proper, if we conceive them to have gone into the water only up to the armpits, &c. as it is, if their whole body was immersed. The other, the custom of the near succeeding times.—As for sprinkling, I say, as Mr. Blake, at its first coming up in England,—*let them defend it that use it.*”—“As for sprinkling, properly called, it seems it was, at sixteen hundred and forty five, just then beginning, and used (in England) by very few. It must have begun in disorderly times, after forty one. They (the assembly of divines) reformed the font into a basin, &c.”

Dr. Whitby.—“It being so expressly declared here, (Rom. vi. 4. and Col. ii. 12.) that we are buried *with Christ in baptism*, by being buried under water, and the argument to oblige us to a conformity to his death, by dying to sin, being taken hence; and *this immersion being religiously observed by all christians for thirteen centuries*, and approved by our church, it were to be wished, that this custom might again be of general use, and aspersion only permitted, as of old, in case of the *clinici*, or in present danger of death.”

Westminster Assembly of divines.—Notwithstanding they “reformed the *font* into a *basin*,” or substituted sprinkling for immersion by a majority of but a single vote, yet they allow in their Annotations on Rom. vi. 4, that by the phrase “*buried with*

him by baptism," the apostle seemeth to allude to the ancient manner of baptism, which was to dip the parties baptized, and, as were, to bury them under water."

Calvin.—"From John iii. 23, it may be inferred that baptism was administered by John and Christ, by plunging the whole body under water."—"Here we see how baptism was administered among the ancients, for they immersed the whole body in water."

Cajetan.—"Christ ascended out of the water, therefore Christ was baptized by John, not by sprinkling, or by pouring water upon him; but by immersion, that is, by dipping or plunging in the water."—"Thus we are buried with him by baptism into death. By our burying, he (Paul) declares our death, from the ceremony of baptism; because he who is baptized is put under the water, and by this, carries a similitude of him who is buried, (to him) who is put under the earth."

Tilenus.—"Baptism is the first sacrament of the New Testament instituted by Christ, in which with a most exact analogy between the sign and the thing signified, those that are in covenant are by the minister washed in water. The outward rite in baptism is threefold—1. immersion into water—2. abiding under water—3. resurrection out of the water. The form of baptism, viz. internal and essential, is no other than the analogical proportion which the signs keep with the things signified thereby. For the properties of the water, in washing away the defilements of the body, do, in a most suitable similitude, set forth the efficacy of Christ's blood in blotting out of sins; so dipping into water doth, in a most lively similitude, set forth the mortification of the old man; and rising out of the water, the vivification of the new." "It is meet, therefore, that we, being baptized into Christ's death, and buried with him, should rise also with him, and so go on in a new life."

Leigh.—"Baptism is an instrument not only of thy death with Christ, which is the killing of sin; but also of thy burial with him, which is a perpetual mortification. The apostle (Rom. vi. 4.) alludes to the manner in which baptism was *then* administered, which was to plunge them in the water; the plunging of them into water, which were baptized, was a sign of their death, and burial with Christ."

Mr. Baxter.—"It is commonly confessed by us to the Anabaptists, (as our commentators declare) that in the apostolic time, the baptized were dipped over head in water." "And though we have thought it lawful to disuse the manner of dipping, yet we presume not to change the use and signification of it."

Daille.—"It was the custom heretofore in the ancient church, to plunge those they baptized, over head and ears in the water, as (saith he) Tertullian, Cyprian, and Epiphanius, and others, testify."

Mr. Fox.—"Austin and Paulinus did in the seventh century, baptize here in England, great multitudes in the river Trent, and the river Swol."

Mosheim.—“Those who had formed the resolution of amending their lives were initiated (by John) into the kingdom of the Redeemer by immersion.”—“The sacrament of baptism was administered in the second century without the public assemblies, in places appointed and prepared for that purpose, and was performed by immersion. These adult persons, (in after times) that desired to be baptized, received the sacrament of baptism according to the *ancient* and *primitive* manner of celebrating that institution.”

Hanmond.—“A great multitude of Jews, of all parts, went out to him, (John) and confessed their sins; and he received them by baptism, or immersion, in the water of Jordan.”—“’Tis a thing every christian knows, that the immersion in baptism refers to the death of Christ. The putting the person baptized into the water, denotes, &c.”

Pool.—“A great part of those who went out to hear John were baptized, that is, dipped in Jordan.”—“In hot countries, this was usual, to baptize by dipping the body in the water; and to this the apostle Paul alludes (1 Cor. vi. 11.)”

Goadby.—“Baptizing or immersing in water, was no new rite instituted by John.” (*We are buried with him by baptism into death.*) “The apostle seems here to allude to the manner of baptism, indicating, that this, as well as the words made use of at the time, signified a kind of death; for the body being wholly immersed in water at baptism, which was an indication, the apostle alleges, that the person baptized, was to die unto the world, and to sin.”

Doddridge.—(*Buried with him by baptism.*) “It seems the part of candour to confess, that here is an allusion to the manner of baptizing, as most usual, in those early times.”—“The most considerable argument in favour of immersion is, that it was practised in the primitive ages. Several texts in the New Testament plainly declare this, Matt. iii. 6, 16. John iii. 23. Acts viii. 36—39. and it appears by the fathers, that this was, *at least*, generally retained, till *clinic* baptism, i. e. a baptism of the sick in their beds, took place.”—“It will appear from hence, that they who practise baptism by immersion, are by no means to be condemned on that account, since on the whole that mode of baptism is evidently favoured by scripture examples.”—“Till within these few centuries, baptism by immersion was the general practice here in England, as it is to this day in Russia.”

If, Sir, in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established, the cloud of witnesses which I have produced to substantiate the fact that baptism was administered by immersion, for at least *thirteen centuries after Christ*, must be deemed abundantly competent. These witnesses were men eminent for their learning and piety. They were also Pedobaptists, excepting the early fathers, in whose times neither infant baptism nor sprinkling for baptism, was practised. They could not, therefore, have been influenced, in giving their testimony, by any improper bias in favour of the Baptists, or with a view to support their theory. To nothing, then, but the force of truth, can their confessions be

reasonably attributed. My witnesses, therefore, are entitled to the highest respect and credit. I might easily have made a great addition to the catalogue, but this I deemed needless, as *no countervailing witnesses* can, I am persuaded, be produced. I should think it, indeed, needful to apologize for calling your attention to such a mass of evidence, but for the consideration that it will probably meet the eyes of those, who are not aware that such evidence exists in support of the doctrine of immersion, and who suppose that little, or no evidence, is to be collected from ecclesiastical history, but in support of the doctrine of sprinkling. I very sincerely regret it, that this should be the case; and that an undue attachment to the popular mode of baptizing, should be instrumental to the continuance of the error. Should not we, Sir, and others in our station, as lovers of truth, and as faithful to our trust, use our influence to remove this error from the minds of that numerous class of people among us, and around us, who are under its injurious operation? Were the subject to be set in a proper light, and could christians generally but be persuaded, with a steady and clear eye, to view it in this light, their sentiments, in relation to the mode of baptism, would soon, it may be presumed, be *radically changed*. But however this might be, *we*, surely, ought not to withhold or disguise important and interesting truth, from an apprehension, that it may lead to consequences, *which we may wish to prevent*.

A considerable portion of the above extracts I have made directly from the writings of their authors; for the correctness of which, I feel myself responsible; for the other portion, I have been dependant on secondary authorities; but such, however, as I consider unquestionable. I have not referred to books, pages, &c. from a presumption that the learned would not need such reference, and that the unlearned either would not, or could not, to any advantage, avail themselves of it.

To resist the force of the evidence, which has now been exhibited in support of the fact, that baptism in the christian church was practised from the earliest times, through thirteen, or more centuries, by immersion, must require a degree of incredulity not easy to be accounted for. Nor does this incredulity, it is believed, in many enlightened minds, exist. It is, I believe, generally conceded by men conversant with ecclesiastical records, that baptism, in the first and several succeeding ages of the church, was, for the most part at least, administered by immersion. But while they acknowledge the fact, they do not generally admit, what appears to me, the natural consequence; but plead for, and retain the practice of sprinkling for baptism. This apparent incongruity, with several things connected with it, will be the subject of my next Letter. In the mean time,

I am, &c.

G

LETTER XVII.

Rev. and dear Sir,

IN the preceding Letter it was my object to shew from the best and most unexceptionable authorities, that baptism was practised in the christian church from the earliest times, for, at least, thirteen successive centuries by immersion. If, as I believe, I have produced evidence to substantiate the fact, the conclusion, to me, seems unavoidable, that baptism by *immersion* is a divine institute, and that this is *the only mode* of scriptural and valid baptism. I should not insist, however, on the necessity of this conclusion, could any scriptural precept for, or example of, baptizing in any other manner, be satisfactorily produced; or could any example of this be fairly produced *soon after the apostolic age*. But as no such precept or example has, and, as I believe, can be produced, I am constrained to regard immersion, exclusively, as christian baptism.

I am not unaware that it has been attempted to trace *sprinkling*, in some cases, for baptism, back to the apostolic age. But the attempt, I must believe, has failed of success. I do not, however, hesitate to admit, that baptism, in certain cases, distinct from that of immersion, may be traced to about the close of the third century. But even this baptism does not appear to have been *partial sprinkling*; nor to have been administered to any but the sick and dying upon their beds. Such subjects not being able to sustain the shock which immersion would occasion, were baptized, probably, by that general affusion, which *entirely wet their bodies*. Such persons were called *clinicks*, and their baptism *clinical baptism*.

The result of my inquiries into this subject, is a conviction, that the following account of affusion and pouring for baptism, is probably correct.—“Baptism was administered by sprinkling or pouring, in cases of necessity all along from the third century to Calvin’s time. The first appearance of *sprinkling* for baptism, was in Africa, in favour of *clinicks* or bed ridden people. Baptism was now considered essential to salvation. The poor, sick people, who could not go to the baptistery, but were in danger of destruction if they died unbaptized, were sprinkled as they lay upon their beds. But the African catholicks reputed this no baptism, or at least, a very imperfect one.”

“The first appearance of (approved) baptism by *pouring*, was in the eighth century, when pope Stephen III. allowed the validity of such a baptism of infants in danger of death.” “This decision of the pope, however, does not appear to have been considered as infallible, as many laws were made in the principal countries in Europe, to enforce the practice of dipping, to the neglect of sprinkling. Nor do I find that sprinkling or pouring water was considered as valid and complete baptism in any part of the christian church, till the beginning of the fourteenth century.

In England this mode was not practised till the sixteenth century in the reign of Elizabeth, to which sprinkling succeeded about the middle of the century following."

Such, Sir, is the evidence of which modern Pedobaptists avail themselves in support of sprinkling for baptism as a divine institute. Nor have they, I apprehend, any better authority, to justify their belief, and consequent practice. Several of the most distinguished writers, in past times, in favour of sprinkling, do not pretend to derive the practice from the apostles, or from early antiquity, but frankly acknowledge it to be an innovation in the church. This concession has, I believe, been general. Even Dr. Wall, although he earnestly contends for *infant baptism*, condemns *infant sprinkling* as a "scandalous thing." Nor is it denied by respectable writers on the subject, in our times, that immersion was generally practised in the church from the apostolic period, through several successive centuries. Is there not, then, apparently, at least, an incongruity in their practice? So far as they depend on evidence derived from ecclesiastical history in support of the doctrine of sprinkling for baptism, they depend, it should seem, upon a broken reed. This has, *heretofore*, been ingenuously acknowledged. Nor is it *now* denied, I apprehend, by those who are conversant with ecclesiastical documents. But the plea, made by Calvin and others, that they who are baptized by sprinkling or pouring "want nothing which maketh to the substance of baptism," seems to satisfy their minds that sprinkling is valid baptism. But that this plea should be satisfactory to your mind, excites in mine no little surprise, as a change in the *mode* of administration, effects, I conceive, an equal change in the *nature* of the ordinance itself. Change the nature or properties of a thing, and the thing so changed is no longer the same. If the nature of water baptism, is total immersion, or if this circumstance is essential to the ordinance, then neither sprinkling, nor any other mode of wetting, can constitute baptism, or be equivalent to it. Where the *form* of external baptism does not exist, its *nature* or *true character* is not to be found. Will you say that the application of a few drops of water to the *hem* of a garment, is essentially the same as *washing the garment*?—that putting a *patch* upon the forehead of the naked, is to *clothe him*?—that giving merely a *crumb* to the hungry, is to *feed and satisfy him*?—that admitting a shivering, a freezing wretch, to a *single spark of fire*, is to *warm him*? But may you not with as much propriety say this, as that sprinkling the *face* is the same as immersing the *whole body* into water? What analogy do you find between them, either as to *form*, *nature*, or *design*? Is baptism a symbol of a general renovation of the inner man? but is partial sprinkling an apt symbol of this? Is baptism expressive of dying unto sin, and of a burial with Christ? But is this expressed by wetting the face with a little water? How, Sir, *can* these things be? Until I can understand them, and see their consistency, I must think, as I now do, that immersion only is baptism; that sprinkling and pouring are entirely destitute of its essential characteristics, and,

therefore, that neither of them can, with any propriety, be substituted in its room or stead.

In the view of these things, can you be satisfied with sprinkling, as a substitute for immersion? Will clinical baptism, which did not exist in the church till it became greatly corrupted, warrant the practice of sprinkling? Can you, then, consistently plead for the practice? Can you, with a good conscience, continue the practice, when it is an *acknowledged fact*, "that all the primitive christians, and the whole church of God, for more than thirteen hundred years, practised immersion, and that too, without exception of countries, whether hot or cold;"—whether parched with drought, or abounding with water. Will you not allow this to have been the case, at least from the apostolic age during several successive centuries? I must presume you will. But in making this concession, must you not also allow, that immersion was the only mode of baptism in the apostolic times? Would the immediate successors of the apostles, do you think, have uniformly baptized by *immersion* had the apostles baptized *otherwise*? This is not to be supposed. The supposition appears to me utterly inadmissible. But let it be supposed a *possible case*, that the apostles did, in some instances, or if you please, in all instances, baptize by sprinkling or pouring, yet a bare *possibility* that they did so, cannot surely be a sufficient ground or warrant for administering baptism in that mode. *A possibility that a thing is so, implies a strong probability that it is not so.* In the view, then, of the above concession, let me ask, does it not appear in the highest degree probable, that your mode of baptizing is a departure from apostolic practice? But is such a probable innovation safe?—Is it justifiable? Is it consistent with that high respect and punctual obedience, which are due to the authority and command of Christ? Let me earnestly entreat you, Sir, very seriously to review this subject, and fairly remove the difficulties, with which your present theory and practice are attended, before you venture to go forward. If, as it is highly probable, sprinkling for baptism is an *entire departure from the original institution*, can it innocently be practised? Think not to plead in vindication of your practice, the coldness of our climate, the scarcity of water in some extensive regions—incapacity for immersion in some cases from sickness, or probable discords and dissensions that will arise among your people from discontinuing it?—Are these serious evils? But were they not foreseen by the Great Institutor of the baptismal ordinance, who commissioned his apostles to go and teach *all nations*, and to baptize or *immerse them*? These evils, however, are, I am persuaded, rather imaginary than real. But should they be as great and as formidable as you may suppose, yet they are very far from affording a sufficient reason for disobeying a positive command of Christ.—Every plea, indeed, which you may make; or invent, for declining from his known command, is an impeachment of his authority, wisdom, and benevolence.

Fervently praying, that you, Sir, and others, may seriously bear these things in mind, and be suitably affected by them,

I am, &c.

LETTER XVIII.

Rev. and dear Sir,

IF, as I have endeavoured to prove, there is but "one baptism" as to mode, and the mode immersion, it is but reasonable to infer that it is a *practicable service*—that all who are required to be baptized must be in a situation to receive baptism. Were baptism by immersion impracticable, it could not be obligatory. No impossibility is comprised in the catalogue of christian duties. If, then, it be a fact that any, who received baptism in the apostolic age, were in a situation, at the time they were baptized, in which they could not receive the ordinance by immersion, it ought to be admitted that baptism was not administered in one uniform manner. And that this was indeed the fact, seems, by many, to be supposed; whence they derive one of their most plausible arguments in favour of sprinkling. On this argument you, Sir, probably place much dependence. And that you should do so, is, to me, the less surprising, when I reflect upon my own past view of the subject. I must, however, say, that the argument, in my present estimation, however specious, possesses little or no weight. It is drawn from a source, I conceive, which will, by no means, justify and support it.

It is thought by some, probably by many, because "John did baptize in the wilderness," and in "*Bethabara beyond Jordan*," that he had *other baptismal stations* than those by *Jordan and Enon*, where water might not, and probably was not to be found of sufficient depth for immersion. Presuming this, the advocates for sprinkling infer, that those of his disciples, who were baptized at these supposed stations, were, probably, not immersed. Whether you, Sir, will admit either the conclusion, or the supposition from which it is deduced, I presume not to decide. I do not, however, hesitate to say, that neither of them is to be admitted. From the attention I have given to the subject, I am persuaded that the wilderness, where John baptized, was a region contiguous to the waters of Jordan, and at no great distance from the lake Asphaltites, where they discharged themselves. But whether he baptized in this particular place in the river, or some other, is a matter of but little consequence. All the Evangelists affirm, that he baptized in *Jordan*; and Mark, although he says that John baptized in the wilderness, says also, that he baptized in Jordan, and in such a connection, as to make it appear that *his wilderness station* could have been no other than *his station by the stream of Jordan*. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and there went out unto him all the land of Judea, &c. and were baptized of him in the river of Jordan." Mark i. 4, 5.

As to Bethabara *beyond* Jordan, I deem it sufficient to say, that here John "received the messengers from Jerusalem, and bore that testimony of Jesus which is recorded in the first of John, and that he then crossed the river, and baptized on *the opposite side*, which belonged to Reuben and Manasseh; and thus his ministry was extended through *the region round about Jordan*."

These remarks, Sir, if correct, as I believe them to be, completely invalidate the argument above stated against immersion. But should the stations in question have been at a distance from the river Jordan, it would by no means follow, that those, who were baptized in those places, were not immersed; for the land of Judea was very far from being an arid country and scantily supplied with water. From the account which the sacred historian gives of it, baptism by immersion might have been administered in all parts of it.—"It was a good land; a land of *brooks of water*, of *fountains and depths* that sprang out of the vallies and hills!" Thus it appears that the doctrine of immersion may be well supported, even on supposition that John's baptismal stations were not confined to Jordan and Enon.

The situation of the place, or places, which our Lord selected for administering the baptismal ordinance cannot, perhaps, be determined with precision. We know however that he baptized, *by his disciples*, in "The land of Judea;" and that "he made and baptized more disciples than John." The account we have of baptism, as administered by Christ, or rather his disciples, prior to the special commission he gave them, is very brief. From John iii. we learn that after his conference with Nicodemus, "Jesus came, and his disciples, into the land of Judea, and there tarried with them and baptized." As this conference was probably held in Jerusalem, the capital city of Judea, it is reasonable to infer, that by *the land of Judea*, is intended, *an open part of the country*, in distinction from a compact city or town. "There he tarried and baptized." In immediate connection with this statement, the Evangelist observes, "And John *also* was baptizing in *Enon*, near to Salim, because there was much water there." Does it not appear highly probable from this account, that the station, where Jesus baptized, was by, or near to *Enon*? This, Mr. Pool, if I understand him, admits as an acknowledged fact. Nor do I think it can reasonably be questioned.

Thus, Sir, it appears, that both the disciples of John and of Jesus might have been baptized by immersion; and that they were baptized in places, which afforded the greatest facilities for the administration of the ordinance in that manner. In this connection it is not impertinent to observe, that a greater number of persons received baptism by John and the disciples of Christ, prior to his death, than the number baptized afterward, during the ministry of the apostles.

Lydia and her household, who were baptized by the side of a river, you will readily admit, might have received baptism by immersion. But will you deny, as some have done, that the water, where the Eunuch was baptized, was of sufficient depth to admit

of his being immersed? Should you do this, permit me to ask—do you, Sir, or does any one else know the exact situation of that water? Can you tell whether it were a pool, a brook, or a river? Should you be able to do this, and could you prove that the place does not *now* contain a sufficient depth of water to admit of immersion, is it to be inferred, that it did not contain such a depth *eighteen centuries past*? Or should you be able to prove that it did not, *at that period*, always, or even commonly contain a sufficient depth of water to immerse a man, will it follow that it did not *at the time when the Eunuch was baptized*? You may indeed refer to modern travellers, and invent specious suppositions about this same water, till you make it so shallow, as not to admit of the immersion of a man's foot. But when you have elaborately done this, you must permit me to believe that Philip and the Eunuch would not have gone down *into*, and come up *out of* water of this description, and especially when the most learned Pedobaptist topographers and divines admit that the Eunuch was *immersed* by Philip.

But should you admit that this contested water was of sufficient depth for the immersion of the Eunuch, yet you will probably contend, that the baptism of the Pentecost believers—of Saul of Tarsus—of the Jailer and his household, and of Cornelius and his friends, could not have been by immersion. But what evidence have we, Sir, that they were not all immersed? Certainly none of a direct and positive nature. Nor have we any circumstantial evidence, unfavourable to the supposition, that the mode of their baptism was immersion. The *supposed* number baptized on the day of Pentecost, is, I am aware, *supposed* by some, to have been too great to admit of their receiving the ordinance by immersion. But how great, Sir, was the *real* number of souls? Is it certain that it consisted of three thousand? St. Luke does not say so; but that “They who gladly received the apostles’ word were baptized.” He subjoins, indeed, that “the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” But it is not certain that they were all admitted to baptism. If this, however, were the case, they could have been baptized, with ease, by the twelve apostles in eight hours, as this period would allow about two minutes for the baptism of each subject. If Abraham could circumcise, on the self-same day that he entered into covenant with God, between *three and four hundred trained servants, besides others*, whose number we cannot ascertain, why should it be thought a thing incredible, that each of the apostles should have been able to immerse *two hundred and fifty* on the day of Pentecost? Perhaps you will say that their *situation* would not admit of their administering the ordinance by immersion. But why should you say this, when there were two or three pools in Jerusalem in which persons might have been immersed—ten lavers of brass, in the temple, the molten sea, &c. which were all sufficient for “the immersing of the whole body of a man;” and a vast number of baths, in private houses, in which the Jews were required frequently to purify themselves by immersion. Was there

not, in all these places, and vessels, *sufficient water*? What obstacles, then, do we find to the immersion of the Pentecost christians, but inadmissible suppositions, and imaginary difficulties?

Whether the circumstances of Saul's baptism are to be considered as inconsistent with the supposition that he might have been immersed, you, Sir, will judge for yourself. I must say, however, that I can discover nothing in these circumstances, which will not admit of his having received baptism by immersion. He was baptized in Damascus after having resided three days in the house of Judas, who was probably a Jew. Ananias was directed to this house by a vision to instruct and disciple Saul. On being convinced of the sincerity of his conversion, Ananias baptized him. But *where*, it is not said. If Saul were baptized in the house of Judas, he might, nevertheless, have been immersed, as it is not improbable that Judas had a bath in his house for purifications by immersion. But if this were not the fact, a suitable place for immersion might, in all reasonable probability, have been found at a moderate distance, as Damascus abounded with water. "It was formerly the capital of Syria, and was situated in a very delightful plain, at the foot of Mount Libanus. It was washed with the river called by the ancient Chrysorhoas, or the golden streams, which is divided into several channels. It abounds also with fountains which makes the city extremely pleasant."—Since then abundance of water was *so near at hand*, the immersion of Saul is as probable, as it was practicable.

But the baptism of the Jailer and his household, by immersion, may be regarded as more difficult, and even impracticable. "At dead of night, in the city of Philippi, the Jailer and all his, were baptized by Paul and Silas. Is it to be believed, that in a city guarded by Roman centinels, the prisoners, Paul and Silas, when the Jailer had received a strict charge, at his peril, to keep them safely, would, nevertheless, take him and his family abroad in the night, just after the whole city had been roused by an earthquake, and go to a pond, or river, to baptize them by immersion?"—This objection, Sir, is stated with quite as much force as the case will admit. In reply to it, I have to observe that the Jailer brought Paul and Silas *out of their prison*; but whether to a pond, or river, we are not told. He, however probably did not, as this would not have been necessary in order to his immersion, as "prison yards in the east, as well as the yards and gardens of private houses, are usually furnished with *tanks of water*"—*baths* for bathing. As this is an unquestionable fact, it is hardly to be supposed that the prison in Philippi, was unprovided with so great and necessary a convenience. It may safely be inferred, then, that *the Jailer and his household might, without difficulty, have received baptism by immersion*.

Whether the same inference may fairly be deduced from the circumstances accompanying the baptism of Cornelius and his friends, now claims our attention. In Cornelius we find, as well the charitable and devout, as the military character. He appears, however, to have had but little knowledge of the peculiar

doctrines and institutes of christianity. By a vision he was directed to "send men to Joppa" for Peter that he might receive from him such instruction as he needed. In the mean time Peter was apprised, by a special interposition of providence, of the approach of Cornelius' messengers, and that, laying aside unreasonable prejudices, he must accompany them to that devout man. Peter was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Without gainsaying, he went with "certain brethren from Joppa into Cesarea—had an interview with Cornelius, and "his kinsmen and near friends," whom he had called together. To this assemblage he preached the truth as it is in Jesus. During his discourse "the Holy Spirit fell on them who heard the word." "Then answered Peter, can any man *forbid water*, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit, as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." This, in brief, is the history of the baptism of Cornelius and his friends.—Now as they appear to have been in the house when Peter made the interrogation—"can any man forbid water, &c.?" it is inferred that they must have been baptized in the place where they were assembled, and that, of course, they could not have been immersed. But these conclusions, which seem to be the result of a partial view of the subject, I must consider as inadmissible.—With reference to *whom* did Peter make the inquiry under consideration? You will not say, I presume, with reference to Cornelius or his friends, as they were desirous, we may presume, to receive baptism? Did he make it, then, with reference to the soldiers, who were under him, or his servants? This is not to be supposed, as they had no power or authority to forbid water. Could the question, then, have any reference to the bringing of water into the chamber or room where the meeting was had? This, I conceive, cannot reasonably be admitted, as no person in the house can be supposed to have had either power or a disposition to forbid the carrying of a bason, or any other vessel of water into that room, or chamber. But if Peter's question could not refer to *any persons in the house, nor to the conveying of water into any part of the house*, it must, of course, have referred to *persons and to water elsewhere*.—Cesarea, where Peter now was, it is to be observed, was situated in Palestine, and inhabited by Jews. It was a town or city of distinction, and probably populous. Nor is it to be questioned that many of the inhabitants were supplied with baths for purifications by immersion; nor is it unlikely that converts to christianity were to be found in the place. Now these Jews, neighbours to Cornelius, as they had control of their own property or possessions, had a right to forbid Cornelius and his friends the use of their baths, or bathing places. The question then is—would they (and especially if christians) make the denial? The apostle seems to presume that they would not. Nor is it to be supposed that converted Jews, on being made acquainted with the conversion of Cornelius and his friends, would forbid them the use of their baths for immersion.—As this appears to me the most rational and consistent view of the sub-

ject, my conclusion is, that the circumstances, attending the baptism of Cornelius and his friends, fairly admit the supposition *that they might have been, and, probably, were, immersed.*

Having thus, and satisfactorily to my own mind, removed the obstacles which have been opposed to the immersion of the Pentecost believers, of Saul of Tarsus, of the Jailer and his household, and of Cornelius and his friends, my inference is, that they *probably* were immersed. And when I view the subject in connection with the numerous baptisms, which took place *in* Jordan, and *in* Enon, the probability becomes *more probable*; and when I reflect that the primary and proper meaning of *baptizō* is *to immerse*, it rises almost, or quite, to an *absolute certainty*.—That all, who were baptized in those waters, were immersed, cannot, I think, be reasonably questioned. I do not however infer their immersion merely from the facts that they were baptized *in* Jordan, and that there was *much water* in Enon; but principally from the import of *baptizō*. Did it mean *to sprinkle*, I can discover no satisfactory reason for John's baptizing *in* a large river at one time, and in a place where there was *much water* at another. But if *immersion* were the mode of his baptizing, the reason is as satisfactory, as it is obvious. The criticisms, which have been made on the Greek *prepositions* which stand connected with baptism, and the Greek words rendered *much water*, with the view to invalidate the doctrine of immersion, I regard as too unimportant to claim particular notice. If the doctrine is to be supported by such criticisms, whose *inefficacy has been so clearly and fully detected*, its support ought never to be attempted.

Now, Sir, if the multitudes who were baptized in Jordan and Enon were immersed, and if we find immersion to have been practicable in the several cases just reviewed, have we not abundant reason to believe that immersion was *universally practised in the apostolic age*? But admitting the possibility, the probability, or even certainty, that there were some exceptions to this mode, arising from *necessity*, will the fact justify you and others in your *departure from general apostolic practice, when no ground for the plea of necessity exists*?—Praying, Sir, that you will weigh this subject in an even balance,

I am, &c.

LETTER XIX.

Rev. and dear Sir,

IN my last, I endeavoured to remove objections to immersion, in several cases, supposed to be inconsistent with the administration of baptism in that mode, and to exhibit evidence in support of immersion, as the only apostolic mode of baptizing. But apprehensive that I may not have succeeded to your entire satisfaction, it will be my object in this Letter to *obviate and remove other difficulties which are supposed to lie in the way of immersion as the only mode of baptism.*

Lev. xiv, 6. is supposed to furnish a strong and unanswerable argument that the words *baptō* and *baptizō* do not always mean, in their literal application, a complete immersion or wetting. "As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water." Here the word (*bapsei*) *dip*, it is contended, *cannot mean immersion, as the blood of the slain bird was very far from being sufficient for the immersion of the living bird, the cedar wood, the scarlet and the hyssop.*—This argument, at first view, may appear plausible. But a careful examination of it must convince us, I think, that it possesses no force. It will, indeed, be readily admitted that neither the living bird, nor the cedar wood, &c. could have been *immersed in a very small quantity of blood.* Nor does the Jewish lawgiver, I conceive, say that this was the case. By turning to the 5th ver. you will find "that one of the birds was to be killed in an earthen vessel over running water." But where, and what, Sir, was *this running water*? Was it in a fountain, or stream, and in a locomotive state? Or was it water, in the earthen vessel, taken from a fountain or stream? I do not hesitate to say that it was *water*, of this description, *contained in the vessel*, and that the blood of the slain bird *fell into this water.* Nor will you doubt, I think, that this was in fact the case when you view ver. 51 in connection with verses 5 and 6.—"And he shall take the cedar wood, and the hyssop, and the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them *in the blood of the slain bird*, and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times." The blood of the slain bird fell into the earthen vessel, containing the running water, which incorporated with the water. Into this discoloured mass, the bird, and the instrument for sprinkling, were *immersed.* This view of the subject removes all difficulties. Nor does the subject admit of any other view, consistent with the application of the blood of the slain bird. Would two or three spoonfuls of blood, do you think, be sufficient to sprinkle a defiled house *seven times*, unless it had been diluted with much water? Agreeably with this view of the subject, is the decision of Mr. Pool, who says, "that the blood of the bird and the water were mixed together, partly for conveniency of sprinkling, and partly to signify Christ, who came by water and blood." Mr. Goadby also observes, that "the earthen vessel was filled with fountain or river water, and the bird killed over the vessel. Water being more limpid and refined by running, was therefore more proper for purification."—In concurrence with these, are the sentiments of Mr. Henry; thus we find a quantity of liquid abundantly sufficient for the immersion of the living bird, and for the sprinkler, and for the purpose of sprinkling; nor can it reasonably be doubted, that *both the bird and the sprinkler were immersed.*

In Daniel iv. 33. and v. 21, we read that the body of Nebuchadnezzar "was wet (*ebaphē*) with the dew of heaven." This use of the word *bapto*, furnishes proof, it is thought, that it sometimes means *to sprinkle.* And that it really does, when used in an improper or figurative sense, is readily admitted. But is it not

so used in the places above referred to? This, I presume, Sir, you will not deny. If, however, you should not be satisfied that the word here is used in a figurative sense, yet you will have the candour to acknowledge that the copious dews of Chaldea in which the Babylonish monarch lay, and which fell upon him, *completely covered his body*. But did not this universal wetting much more strikingly resemble an *immersion*, than a *partial wetting of the face*? The baptism of Nebuchadnezzar, then, furnishes no argument, it is believed, against the doctrine of immersion, while it is altogether unfavourable to that of partial sprinkling.—The words *baptō* and *baptizō* occur in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament about twenty times, and always mean to immerse or dip, except when used in reference to Nebuchadnezzar. Nor will you, I presume, question the correctness of this statement. Can any argument, then, drawn from the words, or either of them, figuratively used, in favour of partial sprinkling for baptism, be conclusive, or forcible, or even specious?

But you will say, perhaps, that Heb. ix. 10, decidedly opposes immersion, *as the only mode of baptism*.—"Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances." On this passage the advocates of sprinkling for baptism seem to place much dependence. Nor will I deny that it *seemingly* favours their hypothesis. But that it *really* favours it, I am not prepared to admit.—The Greek, for *divers washings*, is *diaphorais baptismois*; the correct translation of which is, *divers immersions*. And this is indeed acknowledged by distinguished Pedobaptist linguists.—Admitting the correctness of this translation, you must perceive that the words have no reference to the *divers sprinklings*, practised in the Jewish church. And that they have no such reference appears highly probable from the fact, that there is but "one baptism;" (Eph. iv. 5.) one baptism "as to the outward symbol"—"the same form of initiation." If, according to Hammond and Poole's continuators, baptism is but *one as to outward symbol and form*, it cannot admit of *divers modes* of administration. The Levitical law, indeed, enjoined divers immersions; but do we know that the divers washings under consideration included any other wetting than that by the immersion of divers things, at divers times, for divers purposes, and in connection with divers circumstances? The same law enjoined divers sprinklings. But might not these sprinklings have been included in the "carnal ordinances," of which the apostle speaks in immediate connexion with "divers washings?" As this law is called a *carnal commandment*, Heb. vii. 16, in reference to *sprinkling*, is it unnatural or gratuitous to suppose, that the apostle might have intended by *carnal ordinances* the *various sprinklings*, and other rites and ceremonies enjoined by the Jewish law? Is it not an undeniable fact, that, in the chapter where the apostle speaks of divers washings, he speaks also of divers sprinklings, and that, to express these *sprinklings*, he employs a word of *different import*. To express sprinkling he constantly uses the word *rantizō*, which differs as widely from *baptizō*, as *sprinkle* differs from *immerse*. But does not this fact render it in

the highest degree probable, if not absolutely certain, that the *divers washings* under consideration intend only *divers immersions*? That these washings have reference to divers immersions is unquestionably true, as no small portion of the Jewish ritual consisted of divers immersions. And that they have *exclusive* reference to such immersions, is acknowledged by some of the most distinguished Pedobaptist critics. But should it be admitted that the washings, in question, may possibly include other modes of wetting than that by immersion, is it justifiable to infer that christian baptism is properly administered by sprinkling? As we certainly know that these washings *mean immersions*, and as it is highly probable, if not certain, that they *mean nothing else*, why should we contend for any other mode of baptizing than that of immersion? Why should we build upon a foundation, which, at best, is but *sandy*, to the neglect of a foundation acknowledged by all to be both "sure and steadfast?" Shall we adventure upon an experiment, which appears so hazardous? For my own part, I am constrained to say—I dare not.

Will you say, Sir, that Mark vii. 4. furnishes evidence that baptism does not always imply immersion? "And when they come from the market, except they wash, (baptizontai) they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing (baptismōis) of cups, and pots, and of brazen vessels, and tables. These washings or baptisms, you may suppose, *do not imply immersions*. But you will admit, however, I presume, that it cannot be proved, that they do not. And I will admit, Sir, on my part, that it cannot be *demonstrated* that they do signify immersions. I am, however, well satisfied that they do signify this. The sons of Aaron, we know, when defiled, were required by the Levitical law, to wash their bodies. "Whosoever toucheth any creeping thing, &c. shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water." Bathing or immersion is here intended. As the Jews, then, were in the habit of washing themselves when they returned from the market, before they ate any food, may it not reasonably be inferred that they followed the example of their priests, by entirely washing or immersing their bodies? That this was in fact the case, hardly admits, I should think, of doubt. Nor does it seem to be doubted by Pool, and Goadby, and other learned commentators. If their decision may be depended on, the Jews "when they come from the hall of judgment, or any the like mixed assemblies, they wash their whole body, for fear they may have been defiled by the presence of heathens, or promiscuous company of men there, before they eat." "In the market and other places of general resort, there were always many Gentiles, and therefore, as the Jews might possibly touch them without knowing it, they made it a constant rule to wash themselves all over, when they returned from the market, or from the court of judicature, or any place of general resort, before they sat down to eat." The learned, but cautious Doddridge says, "that when they come from the market, or any other place of public course, lest they should, without their knowledge, have touched

any thing unclean, they eat not till they have washed their hands, at least, if not their whole body." The manner in which "cups, pots, &c." were washed, or baptized, we learn from Lev. xi. 32. "And upon whatsoever any of them (unclean animals) when they are dead doth fall, it shall be unclean; whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, *whatsoever* vessel it be, wherein any work is done, it must be put into water; so shall it be cleansed." Thus the law of God as well as the tradition of the elders, required that defiled vessels should be put *into* water or *immersed*. Nor are tables to be excepted from this general rule, as they were not such unwieldy things as our dining tables, but *couches which easily admitted of immersion*.

But you may say in objection to the above commentary on the word *wash*, that the Pharisees and the Jews did not eat without first washing their *hands*. Mark vii. 3. From this circumstance you will infer, perhaps, that they washed their hands *only* when they returned from the market. But the inference, I am persuaded, is by no means to be admitted. The washing of hands was an ordinary practice among the Jews, before they ate, or took their meals. But their washing when they returned from the market, was an extraordinary practice, which consisted in an entire immersion of the body. And that the washings in question admit of, and indeed require this distinction, seems to me too apparent for any reasonable doubt. But should you contend that the washing among the Jews, when they returned from the market, was the same as their ordinary washing, which was restricted to their hands, I have only to add, that as the latter washing is expressed by the Greek word *nipsōntai*, and the former by *baptismois*, little or no dependence is to be placed on reasoning from the one to the other. Nor is it by any means certain, that *baptizō* is ever employed in the inspired volume, to express the action of washing the hands. I am indeed aware, that in Luke xi. 38, a certain Pharisee marvelled that Christ had not first washed (*ebaptisthe*) before dinner. But whether his surprise arose from Christ's neglecting to wash his hands, or his whole body, we are not told. Nor can we, with certainty, determine the question. It is not improbable, however, that the Pharisee had expected that his illustrious guest, being a Jew, and having been exposed to defilement from "the people that were gathered thick together" about him, would have *immersed himself* "before dinner." But if his surprise were owing to his neglect to wash his *hands only*, what will you infer from this circumstance? that immersion is not the only mode of baptizing? The inference, Sir, will not be admitted till you can produce satisfactory evidence that the Jews, in washing before dinner, did not immerse their hands in water so as entirely to wet them. But if they thus washed, the washing was *immersion, as to their hands*. If then *baptizō* is sometimes used in reference to the hands only, the parts of the body referred to must be supposed to be *immersed*. But does this supposed fact favour the doctrine of *sprinkling* for baptism? Instead of this, it furnishes, I conceive, a powerful argument in support of *total immersion, as the only mode of baptism*. With this conviction,

I am, &c,

LETTER XX.

Rev. and dear Sir,

THE application of the word *baptizō*, in several instances, supposed to be incompatible with immersion, as the only mode of baptism, I have already considered, and endeavoured to show, that instead of militating against the doctrine I contend for, it rather supports it. In this Letter it will be my object to answer such objections to the doctrine of immersion, as have been suggested by the figurative use of this long contested word. "And all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." 1 Cor. x. 2. As the Israelites were neither dipped in the cloud nor in the sea, their baptism, it is urged, could not have been by immersion. This objection, if specious, is, I am persuaded, far from being solid. If it proves that the Israelites were not baptized by immersion, yet it does not prove, that they were baptized by sprinkling or pouring. This, I think, cannot be denied, when it is considered that they were not baptized by water distilling, or pouring from the cloud, but in the cloud, nor by water sprinkled, or poured upon them from the surface of the sea, but in the sea. The cloud was a miraculous effect. Its character was peculiar. Nor, so far as we know, did it possess a humid quality. As one design of the cloud was to obstruct the progress of the Egyptians, when they pursued the Israelites with hostile intent; so, when the Israelites were closely pressed, "it went from before their face, and stood behind them, and it came between the camp of the Egyptians, and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them; and it gave light by night to these." From this account it should seem that the cloud was not suspended over the camp of Israel, but incumbent on the ground; and that it preserved this humble position in moving to a station between the two camps. But in this removal it must have passed through the camp of the Israelites, so that they were all in the cloud or surrounded by it on all sides. Thus, they were baptized, or immersed in it.—When they passed through the sea, Moses informs us that the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. Their fluidity and motion were arrested by the arm of Omnipotence, so that on either hand of the Israelites the waters became as a wall of ice or solid marble. How then could they have been baptized by these congealed waters either by sprays or streams from their surface? This appears to have been impossible. The truth, it is believed, is, that the Israelites were baptized, literally, neither in, nor by the cloud; nor in nor by the sea. Their baptism was figurative. But while it seems to have had no resemblance to sprinkling or pouring, it is a striking symbol of immersion. As baptism bears a resemblance to the ark, in which Noah and his family were saved, so the baptism of the Israelites in the cloud and in the sea has a resemblance to immersion. And this is all I am disposed to contend for.

Our Saviour received baptism, as well in a *figurative*, as in a literal sense. Agreeably, he observed, before the event took place, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." Luke xii. 50. This baptism refers to the sufferings, which Christ was about to endure, probably in the garden of Gethsemane, as well as by his crucifixion. And it is supposed by some, that his baptism consisted in the wetting of his body by his bloody sweat in the garden, and by the blood and water which he shed upon the cross. This, Sir, is, probably, your view of the subject. But such a construction of his baptism, appears to me too unnatural to be admitted.—*Great and severe sufferings*, we know, are represented as *overwhelming* or *immersing* the subjects of them. David in deep affliction observes, "my soul is cast down within me—all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." "Trembling came, and horror overwhelmed me." "My spirit was overwhelmed."—Jeremiah, lamenting the misery of Jerusalem, says, "The Lord hath covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger—he hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob." And the apostle Paul, speaking of the punishment of the excommunicated men, 2d Cor. ii. 7. exhorts the church to forgive him, and to comfort him, adding as a reason for it, "lest such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow."—Thus we see that *deep sorrow* or *affliction* is a *metaphorical burial* or *immersion*. Such was the affliction, or baptism of Christ in the garden, and upon the cross. But is the application of a few drops of water to the face, typical of such a baptism as this? Do we, indeed, discover *any resemblance* between baptism of this description, and the figurative baptism of Christ? May I not say, with confidence, we do not. But between this baptism and immersion in water, we find a *striking resemblance*. Is it not to be inferred, then, that the figurative baptism of Christ is allusive to literal baptism by immersion? The allusion is too obvious, I should think to be questioned. Nor is this opinion singular. It is supported by Hammond, Pool, Goadby and many other critics of the highest distinction. According to their statements, the baptism in question, is "to be immersed in afflictions."—"To be baptized is to be dipped in water; metaphorically, to be plunged in afflictions." "I myself" (said Christ) "am first to be immersed in the fire of persecution; to be put to a cruel death."—In this point of view the metaphorical baptism of Christ appears perfectly *natural* and *distinct*, but in every other, *distorted* and *confused*. I am constrained, therefore, to believe that it affords no support to the doctrine of sprinkling for baptism.

The metaphorical baptism of the disciples of our Lord on the day of Pentecost is thought to be objectionable to the doctrine of literal baptism by immersion. The history of this wonderful event occurs in Acts i. 5. and ii. 1, 4, 33, from which we learn, that the disciples being, "all with one accord in one place, there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon

each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." Thus were they "baptized with the Holy Spirit, shed forth" according to the promise which Christ had, a little before, given them.—Here, it is said that the shedding forth, or pouring out of the Spirit, is allusive to literal baptism by sprinkling or pouring, but incompatible with the supposition that immersion only is baptism. But may it not, with equal propriety be said, that as the disciples were "*filled with the Holy Spirit*," this metaphorical baptism must imply that literal baptism consists in *filling the subject with water*! If, then, we would avoid this palpable incongruity, let us be cautious in fixing the meaning of words from their figurative application. But whatever difficulty we may find in doing this, with reference to the baptism in question, yet it is obvious that the affusion of the Spirit upon the disciples was copious and powerful—that *it filled the house, where the disciples were sitting*, so that they were not only surrounded with it on all sides, but filled with it. Thus were they baptized, by being, as it "were, immersed in the Holy Spirit, as they who were buried with water were overwhelmed, or covered all over with water, which is the proper notion of baptism." This, Sir, is the view which many distinguished Pedobaptist critics have given of the subject. And, as it appears to me natural and distinct, I cannot but believe, that it is just.

Some have maintained that the text in Isaiah lii. 15, "*so shall he sprinkle many nations*," furnishes an argument against immersion, as the only mode of baptizing. But I am far from being satisfied that it has any reference to baptism. As Christ is the Sprinkler, his sprinkling many nations, may denote the moral purity or regeneration both of Jews and Gentiles, which was to be effected by the instrumentality of his blood, called "*the blood of sprinkling*," or by the instrumentality of his doctrine, which is often compared to rain or water. It is not improbable, however, that the true construction of the passage is, *so shall he create admiration in many nations*. As the Hebrew, according to the best critics, will admit of this construction, and as the context seems evidently to favour it, I am inclined to believe it is correct. "Behold my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee, (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form than the sons of men, ver. 13, 14,) *so shall he sprinkle*," &c. The prophet having predicted the exaltation of Christ in a connected view with his humiliation, proceeds to state the result; and seems to speak to this effect—"As many were before astonished on account of Christ's humble and poor appearance, so shall he afterwards create or occasion admiration in many nations."—This is very strikingly descriptive of Christ; for as he was disfigured by scourgings and buffetings, and nailed to the cross with malefactors; so, he has since become the object of admiration and homage to many nations, and will, ere long, be universally acknowledged as Lord and Christ to the glory of God the Father.

I have now, Sir, examined, I believe, all the passages, in our sacred records, which are supposed to be incompatible with the

supposition that immersion only is baptism, and endeavoured to reconcile them with baptism of that description. Of the success of my attempt, you will judge for yourself. But humble as it has been, permit me to entreat, that you will not write *Tekel* upon it till you shall have weighed it in an impartial balance, and found it intrinsically wanting.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXI.

Rev. and dear Sir,

IN the preceding Letters on the *mode* of baptism, I have endeavoured to show, that, in the strict and literal sense of the words, *baptism is immersion, to baptize is to immerse, and baptized is immersed.* In proof of this, competent evidence has, it is believed, been produced, that the Greek word *baptizō*, when used in its literal sense, means nothing less than to *immerse*, and that baptism was administered *by immersion* in the apostolic age, and through successive ages, in the christian church, till the commencement of the *fourteenth century*.—During this period, few, if any persons appear to have been baptized *by affusion*, except *clinicks*, or sick persons confined to their beds, who could not have sustained the shock which immersion would have occasioned. Baptism of this description may be traced back, probably, to the third century, from which time it was ever after practised in cases of *necessity*. It was however considered as defective, inasmuch that the subjects of it were not deemed competent to hold and discharge the duties of the pastoral office.—In proof of these facts, I do not pretend that I have produced *demonstrative* evidence. I must be permitted to say, however, that I have produced such evidence as has been irresistible to my mind, and evidence, which, I conceive, has *never yet been invalidated*.—I have endeavoured also to show that baptism, in the apostolic age, might, and, without difficulty or inconvenience, have been administered *in all instances by immersion*. In fine—I have endeavoured to answer the principal objections, which have been made, from the *improper and figurative application* of the word *baptizō*, against immersion as the only proper mode of administering baptism. In this enterprise it has been my aim to say nothing by partiality. Nor have I, with design, attempted to substantiate any point but by unexceptionable evidence, and by fair and unsophistical reasoning. To censure and condemn, has not been my object, but to detect and convince—not to excite the passions, but to conciliate the assent of the understanding—not to widen the breach, which is already much too wide, between Baptists and Pedobaptists, but to close and heal it,—to produce these desirable effects, concessions, it is believed, must be made by both denominations. As Pedobaptists, generally, believe in the validity and correctness of baptism by immersion, let them practise this mode, and let Baptists receive to their communion all, who appear to be the friends and disciples of Christ, although they may regard them as erroneous in their be-

lief and practice in relation to baptism. As their supposed or real errors, in relation to this subject, cannot be deemed as fundamental, why should they be repelled from the Lord's table by their Baptist brethren? If each denomination were to make as great advances towards the other, as conscience and christian fidelity will allow, would not the dividing wall between them soon totter to its fall? And would not both denominations soon become one and indivisible in the most interesting acts of christian communion and fellowship? Most devoutly is it to be hoped that the experiment will be made, and that its success will be complete.

By these suggestions and remarks I would not be understood, to insinuate that I regard the mode of baptism as an indifferent or unimportant thing, or that sprinkling is legitimate baptism. That I do not consider it as unimportant, my late conduct, I presume, is sufficient to evince. And that I do not deem sprinkling, to be baptism, the foregoing Letters abundantly testify. I cannot admit, Sir, that any wetting with water, but that of immersion, meets the design of the baptismal institute. Baptism, as to its scriptural import is not vague and uncertain, but definite and precise. Nor is *any wetting with water short of that import, to be considered as baptism*. Two or more things, differing in meaning, or character, cannot be the same thing. Nor can two or more things differing in form and qualities be converted into one and the same thing by applying to them *the same name*. Sprinkling will forever be distinct from immersion; nor can the ingenuity of man make the former equivalent to the latter. If immersion, then, is baptism, sprinkling must be entirely another thing; nor will giving it *the name, ever make it baptism*. Believing, then, as I do, that I have produced competent proof to identify *immersion with baptism*; believing, also, that baptism is a divine institute demanding practical regard, I cannot, I ought not to regard with indifference your sentiments and practice in reference to it. Although I wish to avoid the imputation of bigotry and intemperate zeal, in relation to this subject; yet I must be permitted to say, that if *any importance* is to be attached to christian baptism, *the same importance* is, I conceive, to be attached to immersion. Has the great Head of the church enjoined baptism? But is this injunction practically regarded when its true nature and design are neglected? Or can any substitute in its place, without a divine command or permission, be considered as the same thing as baptism, or as equivalent to it? This, Sir, ought by no means to be admitted. A *commutation act* in an affair of so serious and solemn a nature, requires the sanction of the highest authority. Without this, it can never become obligatory, nor will a compliance with it discharge the obligation we owe to HIM, whose we are, and whom we ought to serve. If we would be the disciples of our Lord, let us do, and without gainsaying, *the thing that he says*. Nor let us flatter ourselves with the *ensnaring supposition*, that we have "performed the commandment of the Lord," when we have only substituted "*sacrifice for obedience*."

The objection to immersion as the only mode of baptism, either on account of coldness of climate, or want of sufficient water to immerse a human subject, in the extensive deserts of Zahara, and some other places, seems to satisfy the minds of many. But this objection, is, I fear, rather an impeachment of divine wisdom and clemency, than the result of a correct view of the subject. As cold bathing is recommended by the most eminent physicians, as highly conducive to health, and as immersion has always been practised with safety even in the cold regions of Russia, the objection to that mode of baptizing is not to be regarded as possessing any weight, especially, when it is considered that in cases of necessity, baptism can, with little or no inconvenience, be administered in baths of warm water. In dry and parched regions, where but little water is to be found, the inhabitants, who are but few in number, lead a wandering life; and as they frequently visit the maritime coasts, their baptism by immersion is not impracticable, nor would it be attended with much inconvenience. But if, in any instances, it should be impracticable, it would cease to be a duty. If, however, it should be admitted that baptism by immersion must necessarily be attended, in many instances, with very considerable inconvenience, and even with a painful cross, yet this circumstance does not, most surely, supersede the authority and command of Christ. Was not this inconvenience, this cross foreseen by him, when he instituted the baptismal ordinance? Besides, did he not enjoin the performance of many duties implying *much greater self denial than baptism by immersion*?—Or, are we, in our christian course, to expect always to tread a flowery path, to sleep on beds of down, and with little or no tribulation, to enter into the kingdom of God?—But whatever may be the inconvenience attending baptism by immersion, in reference to particular places, and peculiar circumstances, the objection arising from these cases, can have little or no weight with application to *our climate and situation*. With respect to all places in this region, we can say, “See here is water”—*sufficient water*. What then is there to hinder baptism by immersion? Why, Sir, do not you, in this way, receive baptism yourself? and in this way administer it to others?—Will you persist in saying that your infant sprinkling is valid and scriptural baptism, and that all who have been sprinkled, whether in infancy or at adult age, have, in a proper manner, been baptized? Permit me, then, earnestly to request you to review the subject with deep and critical attention.—Is it not, at least, possible that you have not given it that thorough investigation, which its importance demands? And is it not more than possible that such an investigation would convince you that ecclesiastical, as well as our sacred records, oppose obstacles both to infant baptism, and to sprinkling for baptism, which can neither be removed nor surmounted? You will readily excuse this insinuation, I presume, when you reflect that in the course of free conversation, which not long since passed between us, you frankly acknowledged, that you “had given but *little attention*, comparatively, to the subject of baptism,” and that “your

mind was *not free of doubt* as to the validity of infant baptism, and the propriety of sprinkling."—Does not this state of mind demand your most awakened and solicitous attention to the subject? Ought it not to bring you to a solemn pause, and constrain you to *suspend*, at least, your present practice as to baptism, till your doubts shall be removed, and the path of your duty made plain and straight before you? But if to you, Sir, it is unreasonable and unsafe to rest satisfied in your present situation, what is to be thought of those, who do not hesitate to say, "we find little or no evidence in the Bible for infant baptism—as little for sprinkling—the Baptists are probably right, both in speculation and practice, in reference to baptism,—and *we should all become Baptists, were we to make the New Testament scriptures the only rule of our faith and practice.*"—What are we to think of *christians* of this description, who remain, apparently, satisfied with their infant, or adult sprinkling? and especially when a door for their immersion is widely opened, and when they have every facility for entering! Many *such* christians, I am apprehensive, are to be found among us and around us. But if they are *real* christians, shall we praise them for this their *prudence and discretion*? "I praise them not." For their temporizing policy and conduct, I am constrained to say, they are to be blamed—*greatly to be blamed*. Nor is it easy to see how they can justify their conduct to their own consciences. Faithfully and pungently ought they to be admonished that they act a censurable, as well as inconsistent part; and that there is much reason to apprehend, should they continue to be *thus ashamed of Christ and his words*, that he "will be ashamed of them when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Solemn, alarming consideration! Earnestly praying that it may produce its desired effect, and that christians of all denominations may come to a more full and clear knowledge of the truth, and have hearts to regulate their conduct accordingly, I am, &c.

LETTER XXII.

Rev. and dear Sir,

I HAVE now plainly and without disguise exhibited to you my views of baptism, in relation both to the *subjects* of it, and the *mode of its administration*; and endeavoured to support them by the most unexceptionable authorities, as well as by scriptural evidence. Although I have used great plainness of speech, I have endeavoured conscientiously to avoid every appearance of unallowable partiality and zeal, of harshness and indecorum. It has been far from my design to give "offence" either to the world or "the church of God." It has been equally far from my design to provoke a spirit of unhallowed controversy, which is so easily excited, which is so disgraceful to the christian character, and so dishonourary to the mild and pacific genius of our holy religion. But in writing the preceding Letters, I have had in view the vindication of my own character, and my conduct in relation to

baptism—the removal of doubts and perplexities from unsettled and inquiring minds—the excitement of a more general and interested attention to the subjects of which they treat, and the extension of truth in reference to them. How far I have succeeded in my attempt, you, Sir, and others who may read these Letters, will judge. What will be their reception by the christian public, and what their ultimate effect, future time must determine.

Should it appear to you, Sir, or to others, that I have discovered an unreasonable partiality towards the Baptist community, I sincerely regret it. Of such a partiality, if I have it, I am altogether unconscious. Firmly as I believe that their theory of baptism is correct, and much as I respect my Baptist brethren, I am not blind to their supposed or real errors; nor are they to *mine*. And *these* are so great as to raise a wall of separation between us, which will, I apprehend, but by few of them, ever be surmounted. If this circumstance implies “utterly a fault among us,” I have only to say, that it is my most cordial wish that it might be utterly removed; and that there shall be no backwardness, on my part, in attempting to remove it. *My heart is open, my hand is extended to receive and embrace the Baptists, generally, as christian brethren.* Nor are there wanting those among them, whose friendship I esteem as an honour, and feel as a precious consolation, who reciprocate with me my views, my feelings, my wishes, and my advances. And it is devoutly to be hoped that this reciprocation will soon take place among all who profess, and appear to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

But you will say, perhaps, that impartiality requires that the Baptists should be censured, at least, for *their close communion policy and practice*. Nor is it unlikely, you will add, that they are much more bigotted than Congregationalists—that their views and feelings are much more contracted—that, unreasonably wedded to their own peculiar notions, and thinking more highly of themselves than they ought to think, they, in the fulness of their self-sufficiency and esteem, deny to their Congregational brethren children’s bread; and unfeelingly repel them from christian communion at the Lord’s table. All this, and much more, of like import, has been said of our Baptist brethren. Nor, if I may judge from some expressions, which have escaped from your own mouth, are you, Sir, disposed to say less. And that these charges are not wholly unfounded, is a truth not to be disguised; and I wish I could add, that the charges could not, with too much reason, be *retorted*. I am, indeed, not unaware that Congregationalists, generally, claim to themselves much more liberality of sentiment, at least, on the subject of christian communion, than they are willing to allow to their Baptist brethren. But let their liberality be *suitably tested*, and it will, very possibly, be found wanting. Will Congregational churches admit those to the Lord’s table whom they consider as *unbaptized*? Generally, it is presumed they will not. But do Baptists exclude from their communion any, whom they esteem as *baptized christians*? What is the difference, then, between the two denominations, in reference to

close communion ? Do they not act upon the same principle ? If, however, there is any difference between them, it is very possible that it will be found favourable to the Baptist denomination. Would churches of this denomination, do you think, repel from their communion, persons whom they acknowledge as regularly baptized in the scriptural mode, and whom they regard as real christians, merely because they had been previously *sprinkled* ? It is well known that they would not. But do not Congregational churches repel those from their communion, whom they esteem as christians, because, considering their infant sprinkling as an insignificant thing, they had conscientiously been *immersed* ? Alas ! that this, in any instance, should be the case. This, Sir, is a subject, for no ordinary surprise and regret, and especially, as the incongruity of the thing seems neither to be seen nor suspected, by those who are chargeable with it. Lord, what is man ! “What *strange extremes*, from different natures *marvellously mixed*, are centered in his make.”

To err, is human, and in reference to all human kind. No denomination of christians, no descendant of lapsed Adam is free from error, either in speculation or practice. All see as through a glass darkly, and discover the truth but in part. All decline, in a greater or less degree, from the right ways of the Lord into crooked paths. And who can understand his errors ? The faults of our neighbours we easily see, and in their full dimensions, and with freedom blame them ; but to our own, although we practise the same, we are dim-sighted, if not entirely blind. These remarks as well apply to different sects and denominations of christians, as to individuals. To Congregationalists and Baptists they may be applied, perhaps, with peculiar propriety. Each denomination believes the other to be erroneous in sentiment and practice. And in this belief, each, in a greater or less degree, is unquestionably correct. But to which of the denominations the greatest aggregate of error belongs, I pretend not to decide. To lessen the amount should be the serious object of both. In the mean time it is devoutly to be wished, that they would more assiduously cherish, and more openly manifest a disposition to walk together, as christian brethren, as far as they can *consistently agree*. And that the two denominations may consistently agree to meet together at the Lord's table for mutual communion, I wish to believe. And that they, generally, *may* do this, is, indeed, my serious belief. Why, I would ask, may not the *two denominations*, in this respect, *become one* ? Why may they not “knit their scattered corn into one mutual sheaf ? Their broken limbs into one body ?” Will it be said, that they cannot consistently thus unite, because each considers the other as too erroneous to be entitled to christian fellowship and communion ? You will probably say that Congregational churches do not view the subject in this light, and that they would willingly communicate with Baptist churches. Nor am I disposed to deny that this statement is, in some degree, correct. I, however, am far from being satisfied that christians of the Pedobaptist denomination are, generally, more inclined to unite with their Baptist brethren

in special acts of communion, than Baptists are to unite with them. But be this as it may, the fact that they have little or no communion with each other, at the Lord's table, is deeply to be regretted.

As the Baptists, however, are generally *open* advocates for what is called *close* communion, and conscientiously believe, it is presumed, that they cannot with propriety communicate with christians of Congregational churches, let us, if they are in a fault, endeavour in the meekness of wisdom to convince them of it, and convert them from the error of their way. If, in other things, they are not more faulty than their Congregational brethren, they may be, perhaps, in this particular. Let it be admitted that they really are. Yet it is far from my intent to say any thing on the subject to offend, or to "shame them." But as beloved brethren I wish faithfully, but with a spirit of love and tender concern, to warn them. I would say to them—*dearly beloved in the Lord*, why do you repel from your communion your christian brethren of the Congregational denomination? Is it on account of *their erroneous speculation and practice in reference to baptism*? That they are, indeed, in an error in these respects, I readily admit. But is it an error indicative of peculiar, if of any moral perverseness? Have not the most learned, and the best of men fallen into it? Is it inconsistent with the christian character, or the best feelings of the devout and pious heart? Does it tend to corruption and licentiousness of morals? Or does it weaken, in the mind, the sense of moral obligation, or prevent the discharge of moral, social and religious duties in general? This, I will venture to presume, you will not say.—Is the error in question, then, *greater* than several others, which exist among yourselves, and among christians in general, and which have, probably, a more intimate connexion with the heart,—and which, notwithstanding, are not regarded as a bar to christian communion? That *such errors* do indeed exist, and in many instances, cannot, I am persuaded, be reasonably denied. Why, then, will you select *the particular error* under consideration, and erect it as a wall of partition between yourselves and your Pedobaptist brethren, whom you esteem as sincere and devout christians? Does not this conduct imply, as well an incongruity, as a fault? Strongly apprehensive that it does, let me beseech you very seriously to review your speculations and your conduct in relation to this subject, and with a prayerful desire to know, whether they ought not to be immediately abandoned.—To become members of a church perfectly free from errors, "ye must needs," brethren, "go out of the world." But if we wish to see our churches more pure than they are at present, let us, in the *first place*, purge them of the *greater errors* to be found in them—the errors of "malice and wickedness," and be more forbearing with respect to those of a *speculative nature, and of minor importance*.

May we not, christian brethren, *safely follow the example of Christ in reference to christian communion*? But did not he receive those to his most intimate communion, who were *much more erroneous both in speculation and practice, than are our Pedobaptist*

brethren, with respect to baptism? This, I am persuaded, ought to be admitted. Shall we, then, regardless of the apostolic exhortation, refuse to "receive one another," as Christ had received his disciples?—To whom did Paul address this exhortation? To Jewish and Gentile converts, between whom existed a wide difference in opinion and practice. The Jewish converts retained an attachment to the peculiar rites and ceremonies of their former religion, scrupulously abstained from certain meats and drinks, and as scrupulously observed certain days, as holy time; nor could they easily be persuaded to abandon the rite of circumcision. But in relation to these, and other things, the Gentile converts had no agreement with them. Hence arose contentions between them, and, probably, a disinclination to unite with each other in christian communion. Some were of Paul, some of Apollos, some of Cephas, and some of Christ. An unhappy and lamentable schism in the church was apparently about to take place. This, the apostle made the most zealous efforts to prevent. He admonished his contending brethren that as Christ was not divided, so neither should a dividing spirit exist among themselves—that they should all be one in Christ by receiving one another after the example of Christ's receiving his disciples with a spirit of humility, condescension and kindness, instead of closing the door against christian intercourse, fellowship and communion with each other. As Christ did "not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed"—as he received little children to the arms of his love, and "had compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way;" so, the apostle enjoins it upon those that are strong, to bear the infirmities of the weak, and to receive the weak, or erroneous in the faith, "but not to doubtful disputations." The errors of the weak were not to be made a subject of doubtful disputation, *as to their admission to the communion of saints.* But they were as readily to be admitted, as if their faith had been more firm and correct. Thus should christians now receive their fellow christians to the most intimate acts of communion, notwithstanding they may be weak or erroneous in the faith, in reference to the subject of baptism. No doubtful disputation with respect to this subject, ought, it is believed, to arise.

Ought we not, christian brethren, to love, with a pure heart fervently, all our fellow men, who appear to be truly our fellow christians, whatever may be their denomination? This, it is presumed, will not be denied. No duty is more emphatically enjoined upon us than that of brotherly love; nor is more importance attached to any duty. It is, indeed, the test of the christian character. "He that loveth not his brother is not of God," but "abideth in death." "He that loveth his brother abideth in light—is born of God, and knoweth God." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "He who loveth God loveth his brother also." But "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother—

er whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Thus important is brotherly love. Is it, then, to be wondered at, that Christ should say to his disciples, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you?" that we should be "taught of God to love one another?"—that we should "owe no man any thing but to love one another?"—that we should "love the brotherhood"—"love as brethren, without dissimulation, and with a pure heart fervently?"—These commands, we are under indispensable obligation to obey. Nor does brotherly love cease to be a duty on account of difference in the opinions and denomination of our christian brethren, from our own. If they appear to love our Lord Jesus Christ, we are bound to love them with undissembled complacency. And may I not add, that *the love*, which we may have for others, if confined to those of our own sect, who agree with us in sentiment and in forms of worship, is, at least, *questionable* as a christian virtue, if not absolutely valueless. But are we indeed required to love all the apparent friends of Christ in *deed and in truth*? Is it not to be inferred, then, that we are under obligation, in every suitable way, *to make it manifest*? True christian love is not like a candle put under a bushel or under a bed; nor like a talent hid in a napkin, or in the earth. No. Like the beams of the sun, and like the "blest showers of heaven," it delights in doing good and communicating—in dispensing warmth, vigour and refreshment.—Now, if this is the genuine character of brotherly love, will it not admit—will it not *invite* to christian communion, and in its highest acts, *all who appear "truly to have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ?"* What, then, is the character of that love, which repels a vast number of christians of this description from the Lord's table, where *the feast of love is spread*, and to which the great and benevolent Master of the feast *bids them welcome*? Is this the love, which christian brethren are required to manifest towards each other? If so, must it not be in a *languid state, and ready to die*? Whatever may be its professions, it but too much resembles that commiseration for the children of penury and distress, which says to them, "depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled," while it "gives them not those things which are needful to the body." How defective is love of this character! How little does it profit! How unlike the love of Christ, who receives in his benevolent arms all who are willing to come to him, and who even laid down his life for them. My brethren, let me earnestly entreat you very seriously to consider these things. Ask your consciences, and the best feelings of your hearts, whether they really approve of your treatment of your Congregational brethren? Can you bare it in mind, that you are required to "love not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth," and feel no apprehension that you but very imperfectly, at best, regard the requirement?

Will you, in vindication of your conduct, say that these your brethren are *not the visible members of Christ's church or kingdom, and, therefore, that you cannot consistently communicate with them at the Lord's table*? But can this apology satisfy your minds? Have

you a right to say that professed believers in christianity, who exemplify their profession by a christian life, are not, visibly, the members of Christ's church? Will you say that christians of this description are not united to him, as the branches are united to the vine, and therefore, that they are not, *mystically*, "the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones?" Are they not "one body,"—"one in Christ Jesus?" This oneness among believers does not seem, in the estimation of St. Paul, to be *in any measure affected by denomination or circumstance*. Agreeably he decides, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." What, my christian brethren, constitutes membership in the church of Christ but *a profession of the christian faith, and a corresponding deportment*? Shall we then deny membership, and the privileges of membership, to such of our Congregational brethren, merely because we deem them *somewhat* incorrect in speculation and practice? These things, I am persuaded, ought not so to be. By denying them that communion with us, which is peculiarly expressive of, and which is designed to cherish and promote brotherly affection, we "offend against many of the generation of God's children," and wound Christ, I fear, "in the house of his friends." Do we not rent his seamless garment, and even pierce his hands, his feet, and his side? Do we not make *a schism* in his church—such a schism as militates with the genius of his benevolent and catholic religion; and such as is censured and condemned by "the very chiefest of his Apostles?" Do we not *needlessly* excite prejudices against ourselves, and injure that cause which we wish to promote? Does no spice of unreasonable sectarian partiality influence our conduct? No pride of party? No crooked policy? No selfish consideration? These queries, christian brethren, demand our impartial, serious, and awakened consideration. And will not this consideration of them be likely to detect such errors in our views, and feelings, and conduct, as ought to be rectified or abandoned? Will it not induce the belief, that we may maintain free or open communion with our Congregational brethren, without diminishing our stature *a single cubit*, in relation to our views of baptism? Without yielding a *single point* of our faith, or making *any improper concession, or dangerous compromise*? Believing, as I do, that we may consistently, and with perfect safety, make this advance, and that we are indeed under christian obligation to do it, permit me to beseech you by the gentleness of Christ, to admit to your communion all his apparent friends and disciples. "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercies"—"put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which, also, ye are called in *one body*."—"Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind, let

each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things; but every man also on the things of others."—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Thus "be ye like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."—Thus "fulfil ye my joy," and the joy of thousands. And may the blessing of many, who may be ready to stumble and perish by *your present exclusive doctrine and conduct*, come upon you.

Thus, my dear Sir, would I address myself to our *Baptist brethren*, and with the hope that the address will not be made in vain. But let me not be understood as making it, exclusively, to them. It but too well applies to our brethren of the Congregational denomination. Of this, may they be suitably convinced; and, ingenuously acknowledging the errors chargeable to their account, may they be disposed immediately to forsake them. Recognizing christians of the Baptist denomination, as their brethren, let them see to it that they do not fall out with them by the way; but study the things which make for peace and mutual edification, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of affection. Let them "do nothing against the truth, but for the truth"—"nothing through strife and vain glory"—"nothing by partiality;" but all "things decently and in order."

Were our brethren, Sir, of each denomination to be *thus* like-minded, how soon would the envy of Ephraim depart, and the adversaries of Judah cease? Ephraim would not envy Judah, and Judah would not vex Ephraim. Jews and Samaritans, laying aside their mutual prejudices and animosities, would readily unite in the exchange of offices of undissembled friendship, and in acts of the most pleasant and profitable communion. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garment; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." "Let all bitterness, then, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from" christians of different denominations, "with all malice." "Let them be gathered together in *one*—be followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love." That this may be the happy case, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ "come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth," that christians of every name, and in every place, may flourish—that all may "know the Lord from the least to the greatest," and that there may be "abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."

In the animating anticipation of this renovated state of things, I am, dear Sir, with sentiments of affection and respect, your brother, as well in the consolations, as in the afflictions of the gospel.

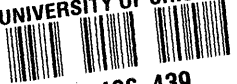
JACOB NORTON.

Weymouth, April, 1821.

ERRATA.

- Page, 9, 21 lines from bottom, for *either*, read *rather*.
 " 10, 22 lines from bottom, for *a* read *and*.
 " 20, 17 lines from top, for *believed* read *believe*.
 " 26, 16 lines from bottom, for *testimonies* read *ornaments*.
 " 29, 3 lines from bottom, for *Kilary* read *Hilary*.
 " 39, 26 lines from top, for *words* read *word*.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



48 436 439

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



48 436 439

